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THE
SCHOLAR ARMED

AGAINST THE

Errors of the Time;

OR, A

COLLECTION OF TRACTS

ON THE

PRINCIPLES AND EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH,

AND THE

AUTHORITY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE WHOLE INTENDED FOR THE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE
OF YOUNG STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES;
AND PUBLISHED BY A

SOCIETY FOR THE REFORMATION OF PRINCIPLES.

THE THIRD EDITION.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD;

By Law and Gilbert, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell.

1812.

PREFACE.

tions; not looking for such as are perfect in virtue and wisdom, for there are no such persons; and if we were to wait for them, no business could go forward. The best author in the world, from the imperfect view we have of some things, may be wanting in some of his reasonings: but if it be neither his interest nor his inclination to *deceive*, we may safely admit him as a teacher. If his *principles* are good and true, they are sufficient for our purpose; and he that follows them may be able to improve them, and carry them on to greater effect. We think it proper thus far to explain our intention, in order to obviate any objections which may be raised against particulars, with design to depreciate the present collection.

We begin with an excellent sketch of the Christian plan, by the masterly hand of the great Lord Chancellor *Bacon*; who, with his other high qualifications, was one of the best divines of the age in which he flourished.

This is succeeded by the Rev. *Charles Leslie's Short Method with the Deists*; a tract which has gone through many editions, and contains an unanswerable proof of Christianity from the evidence of its *facts* *.

Human *reason*, under the specious name of *philosophy*, having been magnified, to the detriment of the Christian religion, and of late to the total overthrow of its doctrines and worship, it is necessary to see that matter truly stated. The late Dr. *Ellis*, of *Dublin*, who saw how fast the encroachments of *reason* and *nature* were

* *Priestley* is a witness to the value of this work. In his late Address to the Infidels of France, he took his arguments from it, without mentioning a word of the author. It is probable he did not know to whom they belonged: but borrowed them from somebody who had borrowed them before.

PREFACE.

advanced, composed a learned and elaborate treatise on the *Knowledge of divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason and Nature*. The treatise itself is too long to be inserted in this Collection; but the author afterwards threw the substance of it into a single discourse, which is here published; and we beg the reader to consider it with attention and impartiality. To this we add, as an auxiliary, a sermon on the true sense of the famous text of Rom. ii. 14. so often turned against us by the Deists, in favour of a Religion without Revelation.

To obviate the errors of the time concerning the origin and use of civil government, we have given the preference to two Discourses; of which the first is extracted from the works of *Roger North*, Esq. and the second from the late Bishop *Horne*; who has treated this subject as it ought always to be treated by Christian writers.

The use of the *church*, with the *sin* and *danger* of *schism*, ought to be better understood by the learned, and more diligently taught among the people, than hath been the custom of late years. Nothing can be more effectual for this purpose than the *three Letters* of the Rev. *William Law* against Bishop *Hoadley*: which, though incomparable for truth of argument, brightness of wit, and purity of English, and honoured with the highest admiration at their first appearance, are now in a manner forgotten*. In what was called the *Bangorian Controversy*, (*Hoadley* being then Bishop of *Bangor*) the cause of the church was defended by Mr. *Law*, and other eminent men, against the Sectaries and Socinians, of whom

* We know, and lament, that the excellent Mr. Law afterwards adulterated his Christian doctrines with many novel and unsound speculations; but when he composed these Letters his mind was in its purest state; and they have no tincture of the errors he afterwards fell into, during a life of too much abstraction and solitude.

PREFACE.

Dr. *Hoadley* then stood forward as the patron and champion; and he is the oracle of that party to this day. To these letters is added a later *Essay on the Nature and Constitution of the Church*: and as it is necessary to see what arguments the Sectaries make use of against the establishment of the church of England, they are collected and stated at the end of this work. The Reader will also find, in the course of the compilation, some valuable extracts from Mr. *Leslie* on the same subject.

Socinianism, under the name of *Unitarianism*, denies the doctrines of the *incarnation, redemption, &c.* and is endeavouring daily to increase the number of its proselytes. The Rev. Mr. *Norris* struck at the root of these errors, in a decisive treatise on the true Distinction between *Faith* and *Reason*; of which he has given the sum and substance in the last chapter of the work, which we here present to the Reader, and wish he may be tempted to make himself better acquainted with the whole book. To this we subjoin two tracts adopted by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge: the first a *Preservative against the Publications of the Socinians*; the second the *Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*; of which this is the *eighth edition*.

In the last century, when fanatical Christianity was the pestilence of the age, it was little suspected that we of the present century should be witnesses to such an alarming approach towards the doctrines and ways of *Heathen idolatry*. It should make us more earnest to guard against *false religion*, when we see how soon it ends in *infidelity*. The folly of this increasing partiality to Heathenism was boldly censured in an anonymous publication, intitled, *Remarks on the Growth of Heathenism among Modern Christians*; which we have inserted in the

PREFACE.

Collection, and recommend it to the consideration of every Christian scholar.

No divine of this church ever studied his profession with better opportunities, or with more diligence and success than the late Dr. *Horne*, Bishop of *Norwich*; of whose mind the superior powers and abilities are abundantly witnessed by his printed works; and whose mild and excellent spirit shone forth in his manners and conversation. In the many papers he has left behind him some of those rules and directions are found, which appear by their effects to have been of eminent service to himself at an early period of his life; and which cannot fail to be of like service to all young students in divinity, who have entered on the same course, and wish to be followers of so bright an example. Of these a specimen is extracted; and we have obtained permission to publish it. The pieces, short as they are, will be found to comprehend more matter than many large volumes. We do not enquire how far what we have printed was his own, or how far it was taken from others, to be applied to his own use. The improvement to be derived from it, is still the same. But as he is not now alive to explain to us the meaning of some of his notes, we are obliged to take things as we find them, and to bespeak the candour of the Reader on that account. Had we been aware of it sooner, we might have taken advantage of a very interesting note in the second volume of his Sermons, and have added the piece there spoken of, which cannot be extolled beyond its merits*. If this work should be

* The note is as follows: "Bishop TAYLOR's *Moral Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity*, republished since this Discourse was written, by a learned and amiable prelate of our church, (Bishop *Hurd*). May it meet with the success it deserves; for no tract ever came from the pen of man, better calculated to dispel those doubts and difficulties which

PREFACE.

carried on farther, no tract can be more worthy of a place in a subsequent volume.

We have nothing farther to say, but that we humbly and earnestly entreat all lovers of Christian truth and useful learning, who wish to see this church and nation preserved under the dangers and temptations which now threaten it, to give their kind encouragement, and use their influence, in behalf of the present well-intended compilation: assuring them they will here find a great store of valuable truth, and perhaps also a fund of entertainment, at a very reasonable price. If the work should happily be found to answer the intention of the SOCIETY, one or more volumes may hereafter be added. But if any evil habits of the age, or the influence of the enemies of this Church, and of the truth which it maintains, should so far prevail as to render such a seasonable undertaking abortive, corruption must in that case be farther advanced than we are willing to believe. Be it more or less, may the great Physician of souls assist and prosper us in thus contributing to the cure of it!

may arise in the mind of a believer, or to work conviction and conversion in that of an unbeliever, who can bring himself to give it a fair and attentive perusal. This has ever appeared to me to be its true character, since the hour when, with equal surprize and pleasure, I first met with it, where it so long lay hidden from the fashionable world, in the *Ductor Dubitantium*."—*Horne's Sermons*, Vol. II. p. 3, 3d edit.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE TRACTS mentioned in the Preface being comprehended within fewer Pages than was expected, the EDITOR has determined, with the Advice of a MEMBER of the SOCIETY, to add to the Second Volume "Dr. JEREMY TAYLOR'S MORAL DEMONSTRATION," already recommended by two Bishops in the Preface; a Work whose Value is without Exception, and which every Purchaser of these Volumes will be glad to read.

It has also been thought adviseable to prefix to the Collection, the PROPOSALS the SOCIETY have at different Times published.

THE HISTORY OF THE

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N^o I.

A PROPOSAL

FOR THE

REFORMATION OF PRINCIPLES.

THE late institution of Sunday Schools having been so well supported by the rich and honourable of this kingdom, and so well received by the poor, we are encouraged to hope that some similar plan will be adopted for preventing the corruption which prevails among scholars, and persons of the higher orders of life, from evil *principles*, and what may be called *a monopoly of the press*. We have long been witnesses to the artifices and assiduity of sectaries, republicans, socinians, and infidels. These may differ very much from one another in their opinions: but if any mischief is to be aimed at the church or its doctrines; if any popular lure is to be thrown out for the raising of a party, and promoting some public disturbance, they never fail to make a common cause of it; and a large body of men, animated by one spirit, and acting in one direction, must necessarily act with weight and effect. Let us observe what *they do*, and it will hence appear what *we ought to do*.

About forty years ago, when some promising schemes had failed, *a Monthly Review* of religion and literature was set on foot; the object of which was to lessen the influence of all such works as should be written in defence of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, by defaming either the abilities or the integrity of their authors, omitting their arguments, and exhibiting unconnected scraps, from which the public must form an

unjust idea: and, on the other hand, by praising the parts and literature of loose, dangerous, and fanatical writers, blanching their bigotry, and presenting their productions to the best advantage.

This undertaking, contrived by some out of malignity, and encouraged by others through inadvertence and curiosity, must in so long a time, by possessing itself of the avenues to public opinion, have had a pernicious effect on the *Principles* and *Learning* of the age. By another like artifice, some useful works, of established reputation, have been taken up, and re-published by insidious Editors, with omissions and interpolations of their own, for the purpose of misrepresenting public characters, and dispersing unsound opinions. Many readers are apprized of what hath happened to the *Biographia Britannica*, under the management of an Editor, who is a person of influence among the Dissenters; and it hath been hinted, that a plan is in *embryo*, of setting forth the English language after the manner of the great work *de la Crusca*, by dissenting Editors; in which case, such authorities will be admitted as are proper to insinuate into students the new doctrines and dangerous opinions of the conventicle. This would be a great stroke, and therefore the alarm should be given in time. For which purpose, we request the readers of this paper to peruse Mr. *Burke's* account of that *literary cabal in France*, which, by poisoning the fountains of literature, of late effected the destruction of their church and government. See *Reflections*, p. 165, &c. The same practices, and with the same views, are now carrying on in this country; and the party have been heard to boast, that their purposes will be accomplished without force of arms, by the effect of the press, in giving *new lights* to the people*. A reverend and learned Divine, now the head of a College in *Oxford*, in a sermon lately preached before that University, observed of the same party, that “they command almost every channel of information, and have the direction of almost every periodical publication.”

That no opportunity may be lost, novels have been written, to insinuate under that disguise the errors of heresy and infidelity; as people, if they were to poison children, would mix arsenic with their sugar plums.

* We have heard it reported, that the sum of 10,000*l.* was subscribed, for dispersing that mischievous and worthless piece of *Thomas Paine*; which in virtue of this liberal support, was found in pot-houses and petty assemblies in all parts of the country.

Many pious and learned, and some great men, dispersed about the kingdom, as well laity as clergy, have long seen and lamented the evils here complained of, and wished for a remedy. The first object, therefore, of this Proposal is, to bring some of these together into small parties, as time and place will admit, and promote a farther consultation, by a correspondence between them. All *particulars* will dispose them under the three following questions: 1. What is to be done? 2. With what support? and 3. By what persons?

If it be asked *what* is to be *done*; we have an answer ready, while we observe *what* the adversary is *doing*. If *false* accounts are given of authors and their works, to *deceive* the public, let a *true* account be given, to *undeceive* them. If some old books are re-published in a spurious form, to mislead the readers of them, let other good and useful pieces be either re-published, or brought out to the light: and let students in divinity be furnished, at a cheap rate, with such *compilations* as they may read without *danger* to their *principles*. Little cheap pamphlets might also be dispersed among the common people: and such might be found, as would be of great *effect*, though *little known*.

If it should farther be asked, by what means, and by what persons, all this is to be effected? We answer: as all other things of the kind are; by the counsel of the wise; the money of the opulent; and the activity of men who are fit for business: of whom, we presume, many will be found in our Universities, and among the parochial clergy, and in the Inns of Court: when they shall be enquired after by their friends, and encouraged by their superiors.

We add nothing farther to alarm or allure our readers. With the blessing of God, the design will grow and prosper, even to the surprise of those who are the first feeble instruments. To him, therefore, we recommend it and ourselves, under an assurance, that all they who are zealous for his honour, and would rescue their country from the prevailing tyranny of a self-erected literary cabal over our minds, which is worse than any that can be over our persons and estates, will take this Proposal into consideration. And let it not be urged, as it probably will, that what can be done for the purpose in view, is already done by the *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*. We are sensible of, and thankful for, the good which accrues daily to the religious interest of this kingdom,

From the pious and extensive efforts of that respectable body ; and have good reason to expect the hearty concurrence of many of its members in their private capacity ; but it must have appeared from what has been said, that such a Proposal as the present cannot be brought to effect, but by due recourse to several expedients, which do not lie within the limits of their general plan.

LONDON, *Jan. 1, 1792.*

☞ Something farther will be laid before the Public, when the Gentlemen who now have this business under their consideration, shall be ready to offer it.

N^o II.A SEQUEL to the *Proposal for a Reformation of Principles.*

SOME Gentlemen, who are undoubted friends to our civil and ecclesiastical Constitution as by Law established, having farther considered the state of things, as set forth in a late *Proposal for a Reformation of Principles*; and seeing how many ill-affected and seditious associations are formed and forming amongst us, to the corruption of Religion, Learning, and good Manners; the disturbing of the public peace, the endangering of life and property, and of every thing that can be dear to Englishmen and Christians, do resolve, to the utmost of their power, to take such measures, in a literary way only, as shall be thought most conducive to the preservation of our *Religion, Government, and Laws*. And they do most earnestly and affectionately call upon all persons, who are disposed as they are, to assist them herein; as conceiving that there is not, at this time, an object of greater importance than that which they are now recommending to the attention and support of their countrymen.

For the promoting of which, they judge it necessary, in the first place, to provide that a just and impartial account be given of all considerable works in Divinity, Literature and Politics; with a faithful history of facts and occurrences in Europe, as well literary as civil, military and political. For the compiling of which, under the form of a Periodical Review, Gentlemen of the first Character have offered their services, with no view but that of acting faithfully for the benefit of their Country; duly considering how grossly it hath been abused and imposed upon by false and interested reports of things and persons: insomuch that we have reason to wonder and be thankful, that the times have not thereby been rendered even worse than we find them.

They judge it another necessary measure to publish and disperse works of such good principles as may enlighten those who are uninformed, or rectify those who have been falsely taught; and of such excellence, as may deservedly engage their attention: of which a Collection is already forming, to be approved and adopted

by this Society : who will repeatedly have recourse to the same expedient on every future occasion.

This Society will consist of three Classes, all uniting their powers and employing their interest to the same great and laudable effect, under the patronage and inspection of a Committee: that is to say ;

1. Of Acting Members, who will be responsible for the monthly publication of a Review, &c. and of their occasional Assistants.

2. Of a Committee; who will meet at regular times for the transaction of business, and to superintend such publications as the Society shall direct.

3. Of Annual Subscribers, at not less than one Guinea each, to be paid at the time of subscribing. Which money so collected will be applied, under the direction of the Committee, to the general purposes of the Society : and when the subscribers shall amount to a sufficient number, and a competent sum shall be subscribed, the Society will begin to act.

All persons of the Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy, who wish to concur in the design of this Society, are requested to direct their letters to Messrs. *Rivingtons, St. Paul's Church-yard*, to be laid before the next meeting ; and the said Messrs. *Rivingtons* are also empowered to receive subscriptions and benefactions, and to register the names of the subscribers.

The members present at this meeting have the satisfaction of being informed, that similar meetings will be held at *Oxford* and *Bath* ; and we trust, when this plan shall have been farther made known, at many other considerable places in *Great Britain* and *Ireland*: and they observe with pleasure how nearly their design, started by a few private persons about six months ago, accords with his Majesty's most gracious intention for promoting the peace and prosperity of this kingdom in his late proclamation.

LONDON, *June 11, 1792.*

WHEN the two preceding Numbers of this Proposal were offered to the Public, it was justly apprehended, that a more impartial account of Literary Publications, though essential to the plan of the Society, would give more trouble than any other object that they had in view: but that difficulty is now in a great measure removed: and though the British Critic doth not pretend to perfection, or so near an approach to perfection, as it may attain hereafter, its claim to candour and impartiality has never been disputed.

But there are other objects in view, which should by no means be neglected. When the principles of a nation are changed, as hath been too much the case in this nation within the present century, it is a certain sign that there hath been some change in the studies of those persons, who are educated to learned professions: and if so, there can be no prospect of any amendment till a new and better course of study shall take place. Of this the Society being fully persuaded, have determined to collect, and with the assistance and interest of all good men, whom they conjure to give attention to the case, will recommend to young students (especially students in divinity) such Tracts as may furnish their minds with good principles, and with such sober and strong reasons as may (with the Divine Blessing) enable them not only to maintain their own ground for themselves, but to recover to the truth those who have departed from it. They apprehend, that without this step, all the good that may be done by other means will be slow and precarious. Sermons upon single texts are found to do little good to those, who never learned their Catechism; such persons having no rule of judgment in their minds to distinguish between good and evil. The British Critic, if honestly and impartially conducted, may serve in its department to keep us from growing worse; but it cannot reach to the root of the evil. Learned as we are in the present age, there are many and great subjects in which we are to begin again. And though corruption

is powerful and infectious, and falsehood is overbearing; let us hope the opportunity is not lost. None of us can say how soon it may be; and therefore we should work while some day-light is left, lest the night overtake us. By some such expedient as that now proposed, we may be furnished with a new generation of skilful Critics, who may prevail to the preservation of the age in which they shall live; unless the time is come, when the Light we have so long neglected and abused shall be removed from us: which may God, in his infinite mercy, avert!

The first thing wanting is, a general and correct Idea of the Christian Plan; which is furnished in an incomparable piece by the great Lord Verulam. We would next attend to the Truth of Revelation, as proved by its proper Evidences which have never been laid down more clearly and briefly, than by that eminent controvertialist Mr. C. Leslie, in his *Short Method with the Deists*, and his *Truth of Christianity demonstrated*.

Errors concerning the nature of Civil Government endanger the peace of mankind, and were never more current than at present: that subject, therefore, demands our attention; and for this purpose we prefer a Discourse on the English Government, extracted from the late *Roger North, Esq*; an eminent writer of the Guildford family; who goes through the subject in a clear and masterly way; and, having been a Lawyer by profession, his judgment may be liable to less exception. The late *Soame Jenyns* having well exposed the absurdity of some modern false Ideas of civil Government; we would extract this piece from his works, if it may be permitted: and to this we mean to add a Sermon from the works of the late Bishop *Horne*, on the *Origin of Civil Government*; who has considered the subject, as it ought always to be considered, by Divines of the Church of England. A wild sectarian spirit would not prevail so much as it does if the sin and danger of schism were better understood by the learned, and more diligently taught among the people. Nothing can be more excellent upon the subject than the three Letters of the Rev. *W. Law* against *Bishop Hoadley*, in what was called the Bangorian Controversy: which is now in a manner forgotten, though every Clergyman ought to be acquainted with it; for it was an occurrence of great concern, not to the peace of this church only, but to the very being and subsistence of Christianity in the world. To these Letters we would add an *Essay on the Nature and Constitution of*

the Church; with some extracts from Mr. *Leslie*, on the same subject.

We shall speak a great and interesting truth, if we affirm, that no man will understand rightly the nature of *God*, unless he has a proper knowledge of *himself*, that is, of the real state of human nature, and the limitation of its powers. This subject was never treated to better effect, than by the late Dr. *Ellis* of *Dublin*. His Book on the *Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason and Nature*, hath happily convinced many readers; who knew not how to think justly of *God* or themselves, till they were taught by this author. His work being too large and diffuse, for this collection, an abridgment of it has long been ardently wished for: and it is now happily discovered, that his principles were laid down by himself in two Sermons, the substance of which he contracted into one discourse; of which we have been favoured with a copy; and to this we would add another discourse on the same subject, which rectifies a text of the Scriptures, a false interpretation of which has given countenance and currency to most of the modern Deistical mistakes about Nature and Reason.

Infidelity having been very busy of late years, under the new name of *Unitarianism*, the people should be properly informed upon this subject, and the arguments in favour of the fundamental doctrines of the Church of England should be well understood in opposition to such gainsayers. For this end we shall add from the Rev. Mr. *Norris's* decisive Treatise on *Faith and Reason*, the last chapter; in which the argument is summed up: and shall subjoin to it, two Treatises adopted by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; the first, *A Preservative against the Publications of the Socinians*; the second, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*: which is now out of print, except in the small edition distributed by the Society. It was little suspected in the last century, that the time would come, when the fabulous Idolatry of Heathens should be openly preferred to the Gospel in a Christian country. But it hath now actually been done in this country by individual authors, and is done by the nation itself in another. It will not be superfluous nor impertinent if we subjoin some anonymous *Remarks on the Growth of Heathenism among modern Christians*.

No Divine of this Church ever studied his profession with better opportunities, nor with more diligence and success, than

the late excellent and amiable *Bishop Horne*: we are informed, that in the papers he has left behind him, there are such Rules and Directions in many separate pieces, for the study of Divinity, with such an Apparatus of Theological Matter, collected from all the sources of learning, as would of themselves, if put together, form an inestimable treasure, for the improvement of young Students in Divinity. Some of these we propose to add, if it may be permitted.

It is our intention to publish the whole Collection, with the names of the subscribers prefixed; and we trust it will appear, that the times, bad as they are, can still exhibit a large and respectable association of Gentlemen and Clergy, who will shew by their patronage of this publication, that they are desirous and ready, so to think, and so to teach, and so to live, as to draw down the protection of heaven, for the preservation and increase of true learning and true religion.

* The Society, on further consideration, deemed it not necessary to solicit a subscription for this Collection.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Reader of these three papers should be informed, that the first draught of the plan laid down in them, has received some considerable alterations; partly from choice, and partly from necessity: but it was thought better to reprint the Papers, as they were published, than to give new trouble by such annotations and explanations, as are not necessary to the main design.

JANUARY, 1795.

POSTSCRIPT.

The number of these reports should be increased, that the full weight of the plan laid down in them, be secured by more considerable attention; partly from the fact, and partly from necessity: but it was thought better to reprint the Reports as they were published, than to give new copies by such an additional and expeditious, as are not necessary to the main object.

January, 1793.

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A
CONFESSIO

OF

FAITH.

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

FRANCIS BACON, LORD VERULAM.

A

CONFESSION

OF

FAITH.

I BELIEVE that nothing is without beginning but God; no nature, no matter, no spirit, but one only, and the same God. That God, as he is eternally almighty, only wise, only good in his nature; so he is eternally Father, Son, and Spirit in persons.

I believe that God is so holy, pure, and jealous, as it is impossible for him to be pleased in any creature, though the work of his own hands; so that neither angel, man, nor world, could stand, or can stand, one moment in his eyes, without beholding the same in the face of a mediator; and therefore, that before him, with whom all things are present, the Lamb of God was slain before all worlds; without which eternal counsel of his, it was impossible for him to have descended to any work of creation; but he should have enjoyed the blessed and individual society of three persons in godhead for ever.

But that, out of his eternal and infinite goodness and love, purposing to become a creator, and to communicate to his creatures, he ordained in his eternal counsel, that one person of the godhead should be united to one nature, and to one particular of his creatures; that so, in the person of the mediator, the true ladder might be fixed, whereby God might descend to his creatures, and his creatures might ascend to God: so that God, by the reconciliation of the Mediator, turning his countenance towards his creatures (though not in equal light and degree) made way unto the dispensation of his most holy and secret will; whereby some of his creatures might stand, and keep their state; others might

possibly fall and be restored; and others might fall and not be restored to their estate, but yet remain in being, though under wrath and corruption; all with respect to the Mediator; which is the great mystery, and perfect center of all God's ways with his creatures; and unto which, all his other works and wonders do but serve and refer.

That he chose (according to his good pleasure) man to be that creature, to whose nature, the person of the eternal Son of God should be united; and amongst the generations of men, elected a small flock, in whom (by the participation of himself) he purposed to express the riches of his glory, all the ministration of angels, damnation of devils and reprobates, and universal administration of all creatures, and dispensation of all times, having no other end but as the ways and ambages of God, to be further glorified in his saints, who are one with their head the Mediator, who is one with God.

That by the virtue of this his eternal counsel, he condescended of his own good pleasure, and according to the times and seasons to himself known, to become a Creator; and by his eternal word created all things; and by his eternal spirit doth comfort and preserve them.

That he made all things in their first estate good, and removed from himself the beginning of all evil and vanity into the liberty of the creature; but reserved in himself the beginning of all restitution to the liberty of his grace; using nevertheless, and turning the falling and defection of the creature (which to his prescience was eternally known) to make way to his eternal counsel, touching a Mediator, and the work he purposed to accomplish in him.

That God created spirits, whereof some kept their standing, and others fell; he created heaven and earth, and all their armies and generations; and gave unto them constant and everlasting laws, which we call nature; which is nothing but the laws of creation; which laws, nevertheless, have had three changes or times, and are to have a fourth or last. The first, when the matter of heaven and earth was created without form: the second, the interim of perfection of every day's work: the third, by the curse, which, notwithstanding, was no new creation: and the last, at the end of the world, the manner whereof is not yet fully revealed; so as the laws of nature which now remain and govern inviolably till the end of the world, began to be in force when

God first rested from his works, and ceased to create; but received a revocation, in part, by the curse, since which time they change not.

That notwithstanding God hath rested and ceased from creating since the first sabbath, yet, nevertheless, he doth accomplish and fulfil his divine will in all things, great and small, singular and general; as fully and exactly by providence, as he could by miracle and new creation, though his working be not immediate and direct, but by compass; not violating nature, which is his own law upon the creature.

That at the first, the soul of man was not produced by heaven or earth, but was breathed immediately from God; so that the ways and proceedings of God with spirits, are not included in nature; that is, in the laws of heaven and earth: but are reserved to the law of his secret will and grace: wherein God worketh still, and resteth not from the work of redemption, as he resteth from the work of creation; but continueth working till the end of the world: what time that work also shall be accomplished; and an eternal sabbath shall ensue. Likewise, that whensoever God doth transcend the law of nature by miracles, (which may ever seem as new creations) he never cometh to that point or pass, but in regard of the work of redemption, which is the greater, and where all God's signs and miracles do refer.

That God created man in his own image, in a reasonable soul, in innocency, in free-will, and in sovereignty: that he gave him a law and a commandment, which was in his power to keep, but he kept it not: that man made a total defection from God, presuming to imagine, that the commandments and prohibitions of God, were not the rules of good and evil; but that good and evil had their own principles and beginnings, and lusted after the knowledge of those imagined beginnings; to the end, to depend no more upon God's will revealed, but upon himself and his own light, as a God: than the which there could not be a sin more opposite to the whole law of God: that yet, nevertheless, this great sin was not originally moved by the malice of man, but was insinuated by the suggestion and instigation of the devil, who was the first defected creature, and fell of malice, and not by temptation.

That upon the fall of man, death and vanity entered by the justice of God; and the image of God in man was defaced; and heaven and earth, which were made for man's use, were subdued

to corruption by his fall; but then that instantly, and without intermission of time, after the word of God's law, became through the fall of man, frustrate as to obedience, there succeeded the greater word of the promise, that the righteousness of God might be wrought by faith.

That as well the law of God, as the word of his promise, endure the same for ever: but that they have been revealed in several manners, according to the dispensation of times. For the law was first imprinted in that remnant of light of nature, which was left after the fall, being sufficient to accuse: then it was more manifestly expressed in the written law; and was yet more opened by the prophets: and lastly, expounded in the true perfection by the Son of God, the great prophet and perfect interpreter; as also fulfiller of the law. That likewise, the word of the promise was manifested and revealed: first, by immediate revelation and inspiration; after, by figures; which were of two natures; the one, the rites and ceremonies of the law; the other, the continual history of the old world, and church of the Jews; which, though it be literally true, yet it is pregnant of a perpetual allegory and shadow, of the work of the redemption to follow. The same promise or evangile was more clearly revealed and declared by the prophets, and then by the Son himself; and lastly by the Holy Ghost, which illuminateth the church to the end of the world.

That in the fulness of time, according to the promise and oath, of a chosen lineage, descended the blessed Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and Saviour of the world; who was conceived by the power and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and took flesh of the Virgin Mary: that the Word did not only take flesh, or was joined to flesh, but was made flesh, though without confusion of substance or nature: so as the eternal Son of God, and the ever blessed Son of Mary, was one person; so one, as the blessed Virgin may be truly and catholically called, *Deipara*, the mother of God: so one, as there is no unity in universal nature, not that of the soul and body of man, so perfect; for the three heavenly unities (whereof that is the second) exceed all natural unities: that is to say, the unity of the three persons in godhead; the unity of God and man in Christ, and the unity of Christ and the church, the Holy Ghost being the worker of both these latter unities; for by the Holy Ghost was Christ incarnate and quickened in flesh; and by the Holy Ghost is man regenerate and quickened in spirit.

That Jesus, the Lord, became in the flesh a sacrificer, and sacrifice for sin; a satisfaction and price to the justice of God; a meriter of glory and the kingdom; a pattern of all righteousness; a preacher of the word which himself was; a finisher of the ceremony; a corner stone to remove the separation between Jew and Gentile; an intercessor for the church; a Lord of nature in his miracles; a conqueror of death and the power of darkness in his resurrection; and that he fulfilled the whole counsel of God; performing all his sacred offices, and anointing on earth; accomplished the whole work of the redemption and restitution of man, to a state superiour to the angels; (whereas the state of man by creation was inferior) and reconciled and established all things according to the eternal will of the Father.

That in time, Jesus the Lord was born in the days of Herod, and suffered under the government of Pontius Pilate, being deputy of the Romans, and under the high-priesthood of Caiaphas, and was betrayed by Judas, one of the twelve apostles, and was crucified at Jerusalem; and after a true and natural death, and his body laid in the sepulchre, the third day he raised himself from the bonds of death, and arose and shewed himself to many chosen witnesses, by the space of divers days; and at the end of those days, in the sight of many, ascended into heaven; where he continueth his intercession, and shall from thence, at the day appointed, come in the greatest glory to judge the world.

That the sufferings and merits of Christ, as they are sufficient to do away the sins of the whole world, so they are only effectual to those which are regenerate by the Holy Ghost, who breatheth where he will of free grace; which grace, as a seed incorruptible, quickeneth the spirit of man, and conceiveth him anew, a son of God, and member of Christ; so that Christ having man's flesh, and man having Christ's spirit, there is an open passage, and mutual imputation; whereby sin and wrath was conveyed to Christ from man, and merit and life is conveyed to man from Christ: which seed of the Holy Ghost first figureth in us the image of Christ, slain or crucified, through a lively faith; and then reneweth in us the image of God in holiness and charity; though both imperfectly, and in degrees far differing, even in God's elect; as well in regard of the fire of the Spirit, as of the illumination thereof; which is more or less in a large proportion: as namely, in the church before Christ; which yet, nevertheless, was par-

taker of one and the same salvation with us, and of one and the same means of salvation with us.

That the work of the Spirit, though it be not tied to any means in heaven or earth, yet it is ordinarily dispensed by the preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments; the covenants of the fathers upon the children; prayer, reading; the censures of the church; the society of the godly; the cross and afflictions; God's benefits; his judgments upon others; miracles; the contemplation of his creatures; all which (though some be more principal) God useth, as the means of vocation and conversion of his elect; not derogating from his power, to call immediately by his grace; and at all hours and moments of the day (that is, of man's life) according to his good pleasure.

That the word of God, whereby his will is revealed, continued in revelation and tradition until Moses, and that the scriptures were from Moses's time to the times of the apostles and evangelists; in whose age, after the coming of the Holy Ghost, the teacher of all truth, the book of the scriptures was shut and closed, so as not to receive any new addition; and that the church hath no power over the scriptures to teach or command any thing contrary to the written word; but it is as the ark, wherein the tables of the first testament were kept and preserved: that is to say, the church hath only the custody and delivery over of the scriptures committed unto the same; together with the interpretations of them, but such only as is conceived from themselves.

That there is an universal or catholic church of God, dispersed over the face of the earth, which is Christ's spouse, and Christ's body; being gathered of the fathers of the old world, of the church of the Jews, of the spirits of the faithful dissolved, and the spirits of the faithful militant, and of the names yet to be born, which are already written in the book of life. That there is also a visible church, distinguished by the outward works of God's covenant, and the receiving of the holy doctrine, with the use of the mysteries of God, and the invocation and sanctification of his holy name. That there is also an holy succession in the prophets of the new testament and fathers of the church, from the time of the apostles and disciples, which saw our Saviour in the flesh unto the consummation of the work of the ministry; which persons are called from God by gift, or inward anointing; and the vocation of God followed by an outward calling, and ordination of the church.

I believe, that the souls of such as die in the Lord, are blessed, and rest from their labours, and enjoy the sight of God; yet so as they are in expectation of a farther revelation of their glory in the last day. At which time all flesh of man shall arise and be changed, and shall appear and receive from Jesus Christ his eternal judgment; and the glory of the saints shall then be full; and the kingdom shall be given up to God the Father; from which time all things shall continue for ever in that being and state which then they shall receive: so there are three times (if times they may be called) or parts of eternity. The first, the time before beginnings, when the Godhead was only, without the being of any creature: the second, the time of the mystery, which continueth from the creation to the dissolution of the world: and the third, the time of the revelation of the sons of God; which time is the last, and is everlasting without change.

LESLIE ON DEISM

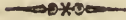
AND ON

**THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUISITE TO
ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENT.**

SHORT AND EASY METHOD

WITH THE

DEISTS.



SIR,

I. **I**N answer to yours, of the third instant, I much condole with you your unhappy circumstances, of being placed amongst such company, where, as you say, you continually hear the sacred scriptures, and the histories therein contained, particularly of Moses, and of Christ, and all revealed religion turned into ridicule, by Men who set up for sense and reason. And they say that there is no greater ground to believe in Christ, than in Mahomet; that all these pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever have been among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians; that they are all alike impositions of cunning and designing men, upon the credulity, at first, of simple and unthinking people, till, their numbers encreasing, their delusions grew popular, came at last to be established by laws; and then the force of education and custom gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till such deceits come really to be believed, being received upon trust from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and bottom of them. Which these our modern men of sense, (as they desire to be esteemed) say that they only do, that they only have their judgments freed from the slavish authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth, which, they say, ought only to be decided by reason; though by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preserve themselves from outrage, and legal penalties; for none of their complexion are addicted to sufferings or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you desire from me, is some short topic of reason, if such can be found, whereby, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long disputes, and which these men of reason deny by wholesale, though they can give no reason for it, only suppose that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated and corrupted, so that no stress can be laid upon them, though it cannot be shewn wherein they are so corrupted; which, in reason, ought to lie upon them to prove, who alledge it; otherwise it is not only a precarious, but a guilty plea: And the more, that they refrain not to quote books on their side, for whose authority there are no better, or not so good grounds. However, you say, it makes your disputes endless, and they go away with noise and clamour, and a boast, that there is nothing, at least nothing certain, to be said on the Christian side. Therefore you are desirous to find some one topic of reason, which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, and at the same time, distinguish it from the impostures of Mahomet, and the old Pagan world: That our Deists may be brought to this test, and be obliged either to renounce their reason, and the common reason of mankind, or to submit to the clear proof, from reason, of the Christian religion; which must be such a proof, as no imposture can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian religion not to be an imposture. And, whether such a proof, one single proof (to avoid confusion) is not to be found out, you desire to know from me.

And you say, that you cannot imagine but there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear, and one; and therefore that one reason for it, if it be the true reason, must be sufficient; and if sufficient, it is better than many; for multiplicity confounds, especially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed an hard task upon me, I wish I could perform it. For though every truth is one, yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But I think, that in the case before us, there is such a proof as you require, and I will set it down as short and plain as I can.

II. First, then, I suppose, that the truth of the doctrine of Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact, which are recorded of him in the gospels, be true; for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to Moses. If he brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea in that miraculous manner which is related in Exodus, and did such other wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from God: These being the strongest proofs we can desire, and which every Deist will confess he would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. Therefore the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of these matters of fact.

1. And the method I will take is, first, to lay down such rules, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false. And then, secondly, to shew that all these rules do meet in the matters of fact, of Moses, and of Christ; and that they do not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, and the heathen deities, or can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever:

2. The rules are these, 1st. That the matters of fact be such as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions to be performed. 4. That such monuments, and such actions or observances be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

3. The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men, at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example: Suppose any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides: I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say, that this was a notorious falshood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted (and I suppose, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world) that no such imposition could be put upon men, at the time when such public-matter of fact was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation,

wherein the thing was said to be done, are all past and gone; and the credulity of after ages might be imposed upon, to believe that things were done in former ages, which were not.

And for this, the two last rules secure us as much as the two first rules, in the former case; for whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used ever since the matter of fact was said to be done, the deceit must be detected, by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions or observances were ever used by them. For example: Suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing, done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get some to believe it; but if I say, that not only such a thing was done, but that, from that day to this, every man, at the age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of such a finger; and that this institution was said to be part of the matter of fact done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having descended, without interruption, and been constantly practised, in memory of such matter of fact, all along, from the time that such matter of fact was done: I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case, because every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

III. Let us now come to the second point, to shew that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have all these rules or marks before mentioned; and that neither the matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the heathen deities, have the like; and that no impostor can have them all.

1. As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded 600,000 men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Because every man's senses that were then alive, must have contradicted it. And therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false, and no such things done. So that here are the first and second of the above-mentioned four marks.

For the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books, as truth, and not to have rejected them, as a manifest imposture; which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deut. xi. 2, to verse 8.

“ And know you this day, for I speak not with your children,
 “ which have not known; and which have not seen the chastise-
 “ ment of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand,
 “ and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts,
 “ which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of
 “ Egypt, and unto all his land, and what he did unto the army of
 “ Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made
 “ the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued
 “ after you; and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this
 “ day: And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye
 “ came into this place; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram,
 “ the sons of Eliah, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened
 “ her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and
 “ their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in
 “ the midst of all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the great
 “ acts of the Lord, which he did, &c.”

From hence we must suppose it impossible that these books of Moses (if an imposture) could have been invented and put upon the people who were then alive, when all these things were said to be done.

The utmost therefore that even a suppose can stretch to, is, that these books were wrote in some age after Moses, and put out in his name.

And to this, I say, that if it was so, it was impossible that those books should have been received as the books of Moses, in that age wherein they may have been supposed to have been first invented. Why? Because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. “ And it came to
 “ pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of
 “ this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses com-
 “ manded the Levites who bare the ark of the covenant of the
 “ Lord, saying, take this book of the law, and put it in the side
 “ of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may
 “ be there for a witness against thee,” Deut. xxxi. 24, 25, 26. And there was a copy of this book to be left likewise with the king. “ And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his

“ kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: That he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them.” Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

Here you see that this book of the law speaks of itself, not only as an history or relation of what things were then done, but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the king as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moses you will suppose this book to have been forged, it was impossible it could be received as truth; because it was not then to be found, either in the ark, or with the king, or any where else: For when first invented, every body must know, that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could less believe it to be the book of their statutes, and the standing law of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or acts of parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, viz. The statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews: And to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had even so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question: Was there ever a book of sham-laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of the laws of the Jews! Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people?

But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a further demonstration of their truth than even other law-books have: For they not only contain the laws, but give an

historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time: As of the passover in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt*: And that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God: And the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel. That Aaron's rod which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness. That the brazen serpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpents, Num. xxi. 9. The feast of Pentecost, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars. As of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 15. Their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated. That it was death for any other to approach the altar. That their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given. † That at his word, the king and all the people were to go out, and to come in. That these Levites were likewise the chief judges, even in all civil causes, and that it was death to resist their sentence ‡. Now whenever it can be supposed that these books of Moses were forged in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received

* Numbers viii. 17, 18.

† Numbers xxvii. 21.

‡ Deut. xvii. 8 to 13 1 Chr. xxiii. 4.

these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to what was commanded in these books, that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly sabbath, the new moons, and all these several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies commanded in these books: That they had never eaten any swines flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books: That they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious high-priest, cloathed with great and mighty prerogatives; whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge*. And that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it? or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above-mentioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, viz. That these things were practised, before these books of Moses were forged; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe, that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things, as were inserted in those books.

Well then, let us proceed upon this supposition, (however groundless) and now, will not the same impossibilities occur, as in the former case? For, first, this must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept, as the Passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt, and so of the rest.

But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them. That they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will

* Numbers xxxv. 25, 28.

suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example, suppose I should now forge some romantic story, of strange things done a thousand years ago, and in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world, that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such an hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before) in their public judicatures; that this book was their gospel and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received as the gospel of Christians; and that they could be made believe that they never had any other gospel? The same reason is as to the books of Moses; and must be, as to every matter of fact, which has all the four marks before mentioned; and these marks secure any such matter of fact as much from being invented and imposed in any after ages, as at the time when such matters of fact were said to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury-plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

Now suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell there, That these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Gargantua, in memory of such and such of their actions. And for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was wrote at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye witnesses. And that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since. Moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our children, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England? And whether, if I, or any other should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam?

Now let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joshua. There it is said, verse 6, that the reason

why they were set up, was, that when their children, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it; it should be told them.

And the thing in memory of which they were set up, was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that time when it was said to be done, it was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red Sea.

And withal, free from a very poor objection, which the Deists have advanced against that miracle of the Red Sea: thinking to salve it by a spring tide, with the concurrence of a strong wind, happening at the same time; which left the sand so dry, as that the Israelites being all foot, might pass through the oozy places and holes, which it must be supposed the sea left behind it: but that the Egyptians, being all horse and chariots, stuck in those holes, and were entangled; so as that they could not march so fast as the Israelites: and that this was all the meaning of its being said, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at least, nothing miraculous, in all this action.

This is advanced in Le Clerc's Dissertations upon Genesis, lately printed in Holland, and that part with others of the like tendency, endeavouring to resolve other miracles, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. into the mere natural causes, are put into English by the well-known T. Brown, for the edification of the Deists in England.

But these gentlemen have forgot; that the Israelites had great herds of many thousand cattle with them; which would be apter to stray, and fall into those holes and oozy places in the strand, than horses with riders, who might direct them.

But such precarious and silly supposes are not worth the answering. If there had been no more in this passage through the Red Sea than that of a spring tide, &c. it had been impossible for Moses to have made the Israelites believe that relation given of it in Exodus, with so many particulars, which themselves saw to be true.

And all those scriptures which magnify this action, and appeal to it as a full demonstration of the miraculous power of God, must be reputed as romance or legend.

I say this, for the sake of some Christians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more easy to be believed, if they can solve whatever seems miraculous in it, by the power of second causes: and

so to make all, as they speak, natural and easy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and easy result would be, not to believe one word in all those sacred oracles. For if things be not as they are told in any relation, that relation must be false. And if false in part, we cannot trust to it, either in whole or in part.

Here are to be excepted, mis-translations and errors, either in copy or in press. But where there is no room for supposing of these, as where all copies do agree; they must either receive all, or reject all. I mean in any book that pretends to be written from the mouth of God. For in other common histories, we may believe part, and reject part, as we see cause.

But to return. The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, in memory of which those stones at Gilgal were set up, is free from all those little carpings before-mentioned, that are made as to the passage through the Red Sea. For notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this great miracle to be done. Josh. iii. 5. It was done at noon-day, before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks, ver. 15. And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds must take to do it: but all on the sudden, as soon as the “ feet of
 “ the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the
 “ water, then the waters which came down from above, stood
 “ and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city Adam, that
 “ is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of
 “ the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the
 “ people passed over, right against Jericho. The priests stood in
 “ the midst of Jordan, till all the armies of Israel had passed
 “ over. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark
 “ of the covenant of the Lord were come up, out of the midst
 “ of Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lift up upon
 “ the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their
 “ place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before. And
 “ the people came out of Jordan, on the tenth day of the first
 “ month, and encamped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho,
 “ and those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did
 “ Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of
 “ Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in
 “ time to come, saying, what mean these stones? Then shall
 “ ye let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan

“ on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over; as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.” Chap. iv. from ver. 18.

If the passage over the Red Sea, had been only taking advantage of a spring tide, or the like, how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the Lord was mighty? How would a thing no more remarkable have been taken notice of through all the world? How would it have taught Israel to fear the Lord, when they must know, that notwithstanding of all these big words, there was so little in it! How could they have believed, or received a book, as truth, which they knew, told the matter so far otherwise from what it was?

But, as I said, this passage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red Sea, is free from all those cavils that are made, as to that of the Red Sea, and is a further attestation to it, being said to be done in the same manner as was that of the Red Sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us suppose that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan. That these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occasion, in some after age. And then, that some designing man invented this book of Joshua, and said, that it was wrote by Joshua at that time. And gave this stonage at Gilgal for a testimony of the truth of it. Would not every body say to him, we know the stonage at Gilgal: but we never heard before of this reason for it? Nor of this book of Joshua? Where has it been all this while? And where, and how came you, after so many ages, to find it! Besides, this book tells us, that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age: and therefore, that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it, when we were children; nor did ever teach our children any such thing. And it is not likely that could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage did continue, which was set up for that and no other end!

And if, for the reasons before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in Salisbury-plain: how much less could it be to the stonage at Gilgal?

And if where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a shain reason cannot be imposed, how much more is it impossible to impose upon us in actions and observances, which we celebrate in memory of particular passages? How impossible to make us forget those passages which we daily commemorate; and persuade us, that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it, before we knew it.

And if we find it thus impossible for an imposition to be put upon us, even in some things which have not all the four marks before-mentioned; how much more impossible is it, that any deceit should be in that thing where all the four marks do meet!

This has been shewed in the first place, as to the matters of fact of Moses.

2. Therefore I come now (secondly) to shew, that as in the matters of fact of Moses, so likewise all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact, which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be the shorter, because all that is said before of Moses and his books, is every way as applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and his miracles are there said to be done publicly in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, "I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing," John xviii. 20. It is told, Acts ii. 41, that three thousand at one time; and, Acts iv. 4, that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first of the rules before-mentioned.

Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things; and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain apostles and other ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments; and to govern his church: and that always, even unto the end of the world*. Accordingly they have continued, by regular succession, to this day: and, no doubt, ever

* Matthew xviii. 20.

shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the book of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world; consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ; then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of clergy, as derived themselves from the institution of Christ; which must give the lye to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was at that time (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged) not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of clergy, likewise of his appointment to administer them: and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated. First, for Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, c. 6, &c. and those which are commonly told of him pass among the Mahometans themselves, but as legendary fables: and, as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them; as the legends of their saints are in the church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux his *Life of Mahomet*, page 34.

But, in the next place, those which are told of him, do all want the two first rules before-mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon: his mersa, or night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c. were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of the Fox or Muggleton among ourselves. The same is to be said (in the second place) of the fables of the heathen gods, of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like; besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. And moreover the wise among the heathen did reckon no otherwise of

these but as fables, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them, of which several of them have given us the rationale or explication. And it is plain enough that Ovid meant no other by all his *Metamorphoses*.

It is true, the heathen deities had their priests: they had likewise feasts, games and other public institutions in memory of them. But all these want the fourth mark, viz. that such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from the imposture, by detecting it, at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia, and other heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof. And the priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c. were not ordained by these supposed gods: but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore these orders of priests are no evidence to the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now to apply what has been said. You may challenge all the Deists in the world to shew any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before-mentioned. No, it is impossible. And (to resume a little what is spoke to before) the histories of Exodus and the gospel never could have been received, if they had been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ; of the Sabbath, the Passover, of Circumcision, of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, &c. are there related, as descending all the way down from those times, without interruption. And it is full as impossible to persuade men that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. under the government and administration of a certain order or priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. And without believing these, it was impossible that either the law or the gospel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men, than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages, without a palpable detection of

the cheat when first invented; as impossible as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind, at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.

V. I do not say, that every thing which wants these four marks is false: But, that nothing can be false, which has them all.

I have no manner of doubt that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, that he fought at Pharsalia, was killed in the senate-house, and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though we keep no public observances in memory of them.

But this shews that the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ, have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true soever.

And yet our Deists, who would laugh any man out of the world as an irrational brute, that should offer to deny Cæsar or Alexander, Homer or Virgil, their public works, and actions, do, at the same time, value themselves as the only men of wit and sense, of free, generous and unbiaffed judgments for ridiculing the histories of Moses and Christ, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded with infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. Besides that the importance of the subject would oblige all men to enquire more narrowly into the one than the other: For what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar, whether he beat, or was beaten at Pharsalia, whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books, and whether what is related in the Iliads or Æneids be true or false? It is not two-pence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to enquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other matters of fact; examine and sift them narrowly; and find out the deceit, if any such could be found: For it concerned them nearly, and was of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable then it is to reject these matters of fact, so sifted, so examined, and so attested as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact, which

have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence at all to us whether true or false!

VII. There are several other topics, from whence the truth of the Christian religion is evinced to all who will judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider. As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen should form a design of converting the whole world to believe their delusions; and the impossibility of their effecting it, without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing that could recommend them! And to impose a doctrine quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and all worldly advantages or enjoyments! And this in an age of so great learning and sagacity as that wherein the Gospel was first preached! That the apostles should not only undergo all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions and most cruel deaths that could be inflicted, in attestation to what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery of their own contriving! Some have suffered for errors which they thought to be truth, but never any for what themselves knew to be lies. And the Apostles must know what they taught to be lies, if it was so because they spoke of those things which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c.*

Neither can it be, that they, perhaps, might have proposed some temporal advantages to themselves, but missed of them, and met with sufferings instead of them: For, if it had been so, it is more than probable, that when they saw their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy; especially when they might not have only saved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it. That not one of them should ever have been brought to do this.

But this is not all: For they tell us that their Master bid them expect nothing but sufferings in this world. This is the tenure of all that Gospel which they taught; and they told the same to all whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment.

For all that were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden prepare for it. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily, and follow him; and told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; that whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife,

* Acts iv. 20. 1 John i. 1.

children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his disciples; that he who sought to save his life in this world, should lose it in the next.

Now that this despised doctrine of the cross should prevail so universally against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world; against the rage and persecution of all the kings and powers of the earth, must shew its original to be divine, and its protector almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms; persuade without rhetoric; overcome enemies; disarm tyrants; and subdue empires without opposition!

VIII. We may add to all this, the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ, such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ, and the other about seventy years after: so that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have inclined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ: but their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate; the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. But there is another argument more strong and convincing than even this matter of fact: more than the certainty of what I see with my eyes; and which the apostle Peter calls a more sure word, that is proof, than what he saw and heard upon the Holy Mount, when our blessed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the apostles; for having repeated that passage as a proof that whereof they were eye witnesses, and heard the voice from heaven giving attestation to our Lord Christ, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. he says, ver. 19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," for the proof of this Jesus being the Messiah, that is, the prophecies which had gone before of him from the beginning of the world, and all exactly fulfilled in him.

Men may dispute an imposition or delusion upon our outward senses. But how that can be false, which has been so long, even from the beginning of the world, and so often by all the prophets in several ages foretold; how can this be an imposition or a forgery?

This is particularly insisted on in the Method with the Jews. And even the Deists must confess, that that book we call the Old

Testament, was in being in the hands of the Jews long before our Saviour came into the world. And if they will be at the pains to compare the prophecies that are there of the Messiah with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumstances in the person, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of our blessed Saviour, will find this proof what our apostle here calls it, "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." Which God grant. Here is no possibility of deceit or imposture.

Old prophecies (and all so agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat: and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all these.

For this therefore I refer the Deists to the Method with the Jews.

I desire them likewise to look there, sect. xi. and consider the prophecies given so long ago, of which they see the fulfilling at this day with their own eyes, of the state of the Jews for many ages past and at present, without a king or priest, or temple, or sacrifice, scattered to the four winds, sifted as with a sieve, among all nations; yet preserved, and always so to be, a distinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas those mighty monarchies which oppressed the Jews, and which commanded the world in their turns, and had the greatest human prospect of perpetuity, were to be extinguished, as they have been, even that their names should be blotted out from under heaven.

As likewise, that as remarkable of our blessed Saviour, concerning the preservation and progress of the Christian church, when in her swaddling clothes, consisting only of a few poor fishermen. Not by the sword, as that of Mahomet, but under all the persecution of men and hell; which yet should not prevail against her.

But though I offer these, as not to be slighted by the Deists, to which they can shew nothing equal in all prophane history, and in which it is impossible any cheat can lie; yet I put them not upon the same foot as the prophecies before-mentioned of the marks and coming of the Messiah, which have been since the world began.

And that general expectation of the whole earth, at the time of his coming, insisted upon in the Method with the Jews, sect. 5, is greatly to be noticed.

But, I say, the foregoing prophecies of our Saviour are so strong a proof, as even miracles would not be sufficient to break their authority.

I mean, if it were possible that a true miracle could be wrought, in contradiction to them: for that would be for God to contradict himself.

But no sign or wonder, that could possibly be solved, should shake this evidence.

It is this that keeps the Jews in their obstinacy; though they cannot deny the matters of fact done by our blessed Saviour to be truly miracles, if so done as said. Nor can they deny that they were so done, because they have all the four marks before-mentioned. Yet they cannot yield! Why? Because they think that the gospel is in contradiction to the law; which, if it were, the consequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To solve this, is the business of the Method with the Jews. But the contradiction which they suppose, is in their comments that they put upon the law; especially they expect a literal fulfilling of those promises of the restoration of Jerusalem, and outward glories of the church, of which there is such frequent mention in the books of Moses, the Psalms, and all the Prophets. And many Christians do expect the same, and take those texts as literally as the Jews do. We do believe and pray for the conversion of the Jews. For this end they have been so miraculously preserved, according to the prophecies so long before of it. And when that time shall come, as they are the most honourable and ancient of all the nations on the earth, so will their church return to be the mother Christian church as she was at first; and Rome must surrender to Jerusalem. Then all nations will flow thither; and even Ezekiel's temple may be literally built there, in the metropolis of the whole earth; which Jerusalem must be, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall meet with the conversion of the Jews. For no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jerusalem for supremacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, whose are the fathers, and from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

Then will be fulfilled that outward grandeur and restoration of the Jews and of Jerusalem, which they expect, pursuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Messiah. They are sure it will not be at the

beginning; for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Messiah (as the Christian church has done) before his final conquest, and that they come to reign with him. So that this is no obstruction to their embracing of christianity. They see the same things fulfilled in us, which they expect themselves; and we expect the same things they do.

I tell this to the Deists, lest they may think that the Jews have some stronger arguments than they know of, that they are not persuaded by the miracles of our blessed Saviour, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Messiah.

As I said before, I would not plead even miracles against these.

And if this is sufficient to persuade a Jew, it is much more so to a Deist, who labours not under these objections.

Besides, I would not seem to clash with that (in a sound sense) reasonable caution used by Christian writers, not to put the issue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in contradiction to the revelations already given in the holy scriptures.

And they do it upon this consideration, that though it is impossible to suppose, that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed; yet, men may be imposed upon by false and seeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as there are many examples, especially in the church of Rome) and so may be shaken in the faith, if they keep not to the Holy Scriptures as their rule.

We are told, 2 Thess. ii. 9, “of him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” And Rev. xiii. 14, xvi. 14, and xix. 20, of the devil, and false prophets working miracles. But the word, in all these places, is only *σημεῖα*, *Signs*, that is, as it is rendered, Matt. xxv. 24, which, though sometimes it may be used to signify real miracles, yet not always, not in these places. For though every miracle be a sign and a wonder, yet every sign or wonder is not a miracle.

X. Here it may be proper to consider a common topic of the Deists, who when they are not able to stand out against the evidence of fact, that such and such miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny such things to be miracles, at least that we can never be sure whether any wonderful thing that is shewn to us be a true or a false miracle.

And the great argument they go upon is this, that a miracle being that which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unless we knew the utmost extent of the power of nature; and no man pretends to know that, therefore that no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous; and, consequently, he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and false miracles.

To which I answer, that men may be so cheated, and there are many examples of it.

But that though we may not always know when we are cheated, yet we can certainly tell, in many cases, when we are not cheated.

For though we do not know the utmost extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing; yet it does not follow that we know not the nature of any thing in some measure; and that certainly too. For example, though I do not know the utmost extent of the power of fire, yet I certainly know that it is the nature of fire to burn; and that when proper fuel is administered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not to consume it. Therefore, if I see three men taken off the street, in their common wearing apparel, and without any preparation cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and that the flame was so fierce that it burnt up those men that threw them in, and yet that these who were thrown in should walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I should see a fourth person with them of glorious appearance, like the Son of God: and that these men should come up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or so much as the smell of fire upon themselves, or their clothes, I could not be deceived in thinking that there was a stop put to the nature of fire, as to these men; and that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned, at the same time.

Again: Though I cannot tell how wonderful and sudden an increase of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many causes, as a warm climate, the fertility of the soil, &c. yet this I can certainly know, that there is not that natural force in the breath of two or three words, spoken to multiply one small loaf of bread so fast, in the breaking of it, as truly and really; not only in appearance and shew to the eye, but to fill the bellies of several thousand hungry persons; and that the fragments should be much more than the bread was at first.

So neither in a word spoken, to raise the dead, cure diseases, &c.

Therefore, though we know not the utmost extent of the power of nature; yet we can certainly know what is contrary to the nature of several such things as we do know.

And therefore, though we may be cheated, and imposed upon in many seeming miracles and wonders; yet there are some things wherein we may be certain.

But further, the Deists acknowledge a God of an Almighty power, who made all things.

Yet they would put it out of his power, to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For if we cannot be certain of any miracle, how should we know when God sent any thing extraordinary to us?

Nay, how should we know the ordinary power of nature, if we knew not what exceeded it? If we know not what is natural, how do we know there is such a thing as nature? That all is not supernatural, all miracles, and so disputable, till we come to downright scepticism, and doubt the certainty of our outward senses, whether we see, hear, or feel; or all be not a miraculous illusion!

Which, because I know the Deists are not inclined to do, therefore I will return to pursue my argument upon the conviction of our outward senses, desiring only this, that they would allow the senses of other men to be as certain as their own; which they cannot refuse, since without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. Therefore, from what has been said, the cause is summed up shortly in this; that though we cannot see what was done before our time, yet by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much assured of the truth of them, as if we saw them with our eyes; because whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before-mentioned, could never have been invented and received but upon the conviction of the outward senses of all those who did receive it, as before is demonstrated. And therefore this topic which I have chosen, does stand upon the conviction even of men's outward senses. And since you have confined me to one topic, I have not insisted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. And now it lies upon the Deists, if they would appear as men of reason, to shew some matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evidence of its truth,

than the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ; otherwise they cannot, with any shew of reason, reject the one, and yet admit of the other.

But I have given them greater latitude than this, for I have shewn such marks of the truth of the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ, as no other matters of fact of those times, however true, have, but these only: and I put it upon them to shew any forgery that has all these marks.

This is a short issue. Keep them close to this. This determines the cause all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whose life was put into English by the execrable Charles Blount*, and compared with all the wit and malice he was master of, to the life and miracles of our blessed Saviour.

Let them take aid from all the legends of the church of Rome, those pious cheats, the sorest disgraces of Christianity; and which have bid the fairest of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, and whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot; at least they are so understood by the generality of their devotees, though disowned and laughed at by the learned, and men of sense among them.

Let them pick and choose the most probable of all the fables of the heathen deities, and see if they can find in any of these, the four marks before-mentioned.

Otherwise let them submit to the irrefragable certainty of the Christian religion.

XIII. But if, notwithstanding all that is said, the Deists will still contend that all is but a priest-craft, the invention of priests for their own profit, &c. then they will give us an idea of priests, far different from what they intend: for then we must look upon these priests, not only as the cunningest and wisest of mankind,

* The hand of that scorner, which durst write such outrageous blasphemy against his Maker, the Divine Vengeance has made his own executioner. Which I would not have mentioned (because the like judgment has befallen others) but that the Theistical Club have set this up as a principle, and printed a vindication of this same Blount for murdering of himself, by way of justification of self-murder; which some of them have since, as well as formerly, horridly practised upon themselves. Therefore this is no common judgment to which they are delivered, but a visible mark set upon them, to shew how far God has forsaken them; and as a caution to all Christians, to beware of them, and not to come near the tents of these wicked men, lest they perish in their destruction, both of soul and body.

but we shall be tempted to adore them as Deities, who have such power as to impose at their pleasure, upon the senses of mankind, to make them believe that they had practised such public institutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of these things, or ever so much as heard of them before: and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done such things as they never did, to make them further believe, upon the same foundation, whatever they pleased to impose upon them as to former ages: I say, such a power as this must exceed all that is human; and consequently make us rank these priests far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers: for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive some unwary beholders; and their power of working some seeming miracles has been great, yet it never reached nor ever was supposed to reach so far, as to deceive the senses of all mankind, in matters of such public and notorious nature as those of which we now speak, to make them believe, that they had enacted laws for such public observances, continually practised them, taught them to their children, and had been instructed in them themselves, from their childhood, if they had never enacted, practised, taught, or been taught such things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, so it is more than ever God Almighty has done since the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has shewn, or belief which he has required to any thing that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward senses of any one man in the world, much less of all mankind together. For miracles being appeals to our outward senses, if they should overthrow the certainty of our outward senses, must destroy with it all their own certainty as to us; since we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our senses, than upon the supposition of the certainty of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle, that is shewn to our senses.

4. This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation, and shews the weakness of the defence which the church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have licked it up, and have of late gloried much in it amongst us) that the doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation contain as great seeming absurdities as that of Transubstantiation: for I would ask, which of our senses it is which the doctrines of

the Trinity or Incarnation do contradict? Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling, taste or smell? Whereas Transubstantiation does contradict all of these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short; and out of purpose. But to return.

If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing else but the invention of priests; and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wisdom greater than that of men; angels; or devils; and more than God himself ever yet shewed or expressed; to deceive and impose upon the senses of mankind; in such public and notorious matters of fact:

XIV. And this miracle, which the Deists must run into to avoid these recorded of Moses and Christ, is much greater and more astonishing than all the Scriptures tell of them:

So that these men who laugh at all miracles are now obliged to account for the greatest of all; how the senses of mankind could be imposed upon in such public matters of fact.

And how can they, make the priests the most contemptible of all mankind, since they make them the sole authors of this the greatest of miracles.

XV. And since the Deists (these men of sense and reason) have so vile and mean an idea of the priests of all religions; why do they not recover the world out of the possession and government of such blockheads? Why do they suffer kings and states to be led by them; to establish their deceits by laws; and inflict penalties upon the imposers of them? Let the Deists try their hands; they have been trying and are now busy about it. And free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have some inroads amongst the Hottentots, and some other the most brutal part of mankind, yet are they still exploded, and priests have and do prevail against them, among not only the greatest; but best part of the world, and the most glorious for arts, learning and war.

XVI. For as the devil does ape GOD, in his institutions of religion, his feasts, sacrifices, &c. so likewise in his priests, without whom no religion; whether true or false, can stand. False religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed close upon the heels.

The revelation made to Moses is elder than any history extant in the heathen world. The heathens, in imitation of him, pretended likewise to their revelations: but I have given those marks

which distinguish them from the true: none of them have those four marks before-mentioned.

Now the Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat; and the priests of all religions to be the same contrivers and jugglers; and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all.

And if the contest be only betwixt the Deists and the priests, which of them are the men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it; and let the Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who by their own confession carry all the world before them.

XVII. If the Deists say, that this is because all the world are blockheads, as well as those priests who govern them; that all are blockheads, except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense; this (besides the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic, in behalf of what they call Natural Religion, against the Revealed, viz. appealing to the common reason of mankind: this they set up against revelation; think this to be sufficient for all the uses of men, here or hereafter, (if there be any after state) and therefore that there is no use of revelation: This common reason they advance as infallible, at least as the surest guide, yet now cry out upon it, when it turns against them; when this common reason runs after revelation, (as it always has done) then common reason is a beast, and we must look for reason not from the common sentiments of mankind, but only among the beaux, the Deists.

XVIII. Therefore, if the Deists would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield and submit to be subdued and hewed down before the priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, that religion is no invention of priests, but of divine original; that priests were instituted by the same Author of religion; and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, instituted from the time that such matters of fact were said to be done, as the Levites from Moses, the Apostles and succeeding Clergy from Christ, to this day; that no heathen priests can say the same; they were not appointed by the gods whom they served, but by others in after ages; they cannot stand the test of the four rules before-mentioned, which the Christian priests can do, and they only. Now the Christian priesthood, as instituted by Christ himself, and con-

tinued by succession to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a testimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Christ, as the sacraments, or any other public institutions: besides that, if the priesthood were taken away, the sacraments and other public institutions, which are administered by their hands, must fall with them; therefore the devil has been most busy and bent his greatest force in all ages against the priesthood, knowing that if that goes down all goes with it.

XIX. With the Deists, in this cause, are joined the Quakers and other of our Dissenters, who throw off the succession of our priesthood, (by which only it can be demonstrated) together with the sacraments and public festivals. And if the devil could have prevailed to have these dropt, the Christian religion would lose the most undeniable and demonstrative proof for the truth of the matter of fact of our Saviour, upon which the truth of his doctrine does depend. Therefore we may see the artifice and malice of the devil, in all these attempts. And let those wretched instruments whom he ignorantly (and some by a misguided zeal) has deluded thus to undermine Christianity, now at last look back and see the snare in which they have been taken; for if they had prevailed, or ever should, Christianity dies with them. At least it will be rendered precarious, as a thing of which no certain proof can be given. Therefore let those of them who have any zeal for the truth, bless God that they have not prevailed; and quickly leave them; and let all others be aware of them.

And let us consider and honour the priesthood, sacraments, and other public institutions of Christ, not only as means of grace and helps to devotion, but as the great evidences of the Christian religion.

Such evidences as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have. Such as do plainly distinguish it from all foolish legends and impostures whatsoever.

XX. And now, last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men who think so unmeasurably of themselves as the Deists, you may represent to them what a condition they are in, who spend that life and sense which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of his blessings, his revelations of Christ, and by Christ, to redeem those from eternal misery, who shall believe in him, and obey his laws. And that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, as that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit; and that there is no

denying of them, unless we will be so absurd as to deny not only the reason but the certainty of the outward senses, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general. That this case is so very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any to discover it. That they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can shew some forgery which has all the four marks before set down. But if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves; or else sit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the priests; of being, not only the most pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the most inconsiderate and inconsiderable of mankind.

Therefore, let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass: and no more time bestowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect how far they have been all this time from Christianity; whose rudiments they have yet to learn! How far from the way of salvation! How far the race of their lives is run before they have set one step in the road to heaven. And therefore, how much diligence they ought to use, to redeem all that time they have lost, lest they lose themselves for ever; and be convinced, by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, That the Gospel is a truth, and of the last consequence.

A
LETTER

FROM THE

AUTHOR OF THE SHORT METHOD
WITH THE DEISTS AND JEWS.

—*—
SIR,

I HAVE read over your papers with great satisfaction, and I heartily bless God with you, and for you, that he has had mercy upon you, and opened your eyes, to see the wonderous things of his law, to convince you of those irrefragable proofs he has afforded for the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures, such as no other writing upon earth can pretend to, and which are incompatible with any forgery or deceit. He has given you likewise that true spirit of repentance to bring forth the fruits thereof; that is, to make what satisfaction you can for the injuries you have done to religion, by answering what has been published formerly by yourself against it; and being converted, you endeavour to strengthen your brethren.

I. CREATION.

You have laid the true foundation of the being of God, against the Atheist; of his creation of the world, and providence, against the asserters of blind chance. If all be chance, then their thoughts are so too; and there's no reasoning or argument in the world.

Others, because they know not what to say, suppose the world and all things in it to have been from eternity, and to have gone on, as now, in a constant succession of men begetting men, trees springing from trees, &c. without any beginning.

But if it was always as it is now, then every thing had a beginning, every man, bird, beast, tree, &c. And what has a beginning, cannot be without a beginning.

Therefore as it is evident that nothing can make itself, it is equally evident that a succession of things made must have a beginning. A succession of beginnings cannot be without a beginning; for that would be literally a beginning without a beginning, which is a contradiction in terms.

II. PROVIDENCE.

As to deny Providence in the first cause, is the denying of a God: Whence had we our providence? For we find we have a providence to forecast and contrive how to preserve and govern that which we make or acquire: therefore there must be a providence much more eminently in God, to preserve and govern all the works which he has made. He that made the eye, does he not see? And he who put providence into the heart of man, has he none himself?

And the glory of his wisdom and power seems greater to us in the acts of his providence than even in those of creation, especially in his governing the actions of free agents, without taking from them the freedom of their will to do as they list, and turning their very evil into good by the almightiness of his wisdom. We see great part of this every day before our eyes, in his turning the counsels of the wise into foolishness, and trapping the wicked in the works of their own hands. This strikes us more sensibly, and is nearer to us than the making of a tree or a star; and we feel that over-ruling power in his providence which we contemplate in his creation.

When the sins of men are increased to provoke God to take vengeance, he permits the spirit of fury to incline their wills to war and destruction of each other, and nation rises up against nation; and when in his mercy he thinks the punishment is sufficient, he calms their rage like the roaring of the sea, and there is peace. And they are so free agents in all this, that they think it is all their own doing; and so really it is, though under the unseen direction of a superior power.

But not only in the public transactions of the world his providence is observable; there is no man who has taken notice of his own life, but must find it as to his very private affairs, a thought sometimes darting into his mind to rid him out of a difficulty, or

shew him an advantage, which he could not find in much considering before. At other times a man's mind is so clouded as if his eyes were shut, that he cannot see his way. Again, several events which he thought most funest, and his utter ruin, he finds afterwards to be much for the best, and that he had been undone if that had not happened which he feared. On the other hand, many things which he thought for his great benefit, he has found to be for his hurt. This shews a providence which sees further than we can, and disposes all our actions, though done in the full freedom of our own will, to what events, either good or bad for us, as he pleases.

III. REVELATION.

But these considerations from the creation and providence, though admirable and glorious, are within the oracles of reason; and are but earthly things, in comparison of those heavenly things which God has revealed to man at sundry times, and in divers manners, and are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and which otherwise it was impossible for man to have known. "For what man is he that can know the counsel of God? Or who can think what the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain; for the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things; and hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out *?"

This then must be purely the subject of revelation; but when the Deist is come thus far, he is entered into a wide field; for all religions, Jewish, Heathen, Christian and Mahometan, pretend to revelation for their original.

To clear this point was the design of the Short Method with the Deists, which gave the first opportunity to our conversation.

The Heathen and Mahometan religions not only want those marks (there set down) which ascertain the truth of fact, but their morals and worship are impure, and inconsistent with the attributes of God; as the indulgence of fornication and uncleanness among the Heathen, and their human sacrifices (most abhorrent to the God of holiness and mercy) and the filthy obscenity of their

* Wisdom ix. 13, 14, 15, 16.

very *sacra*; besides the great defect of their morals which knew no such thing as humility, forgiveness of injuries, loving their enemies, and returning good for evil. Some of their philosophers spoke against revenging of injuries, as bringing greater injury to ourselves, or not worth the while; but not upon the account of humanity and love to our brethren, and doing them good, though they did evil to us; and by the word *humilitas*, they meant only a lowness and dejection of mind, which is a vice; but they had no notion of it as a virtue, in having a low opinion of one's self, and in honour preferring others before us: this they thought a vice and abjection of spirits. You may see pride and self-conceit run through all their philosophy, besides their principle of increasing their empire, by conquering other countries who did them no harm, whom they called barbarians.

Into this class comes likewise the Sensual Paradise proposed by Mahomet, and his principle of propagating his religion by the sword.

The Jewish religion has all the certainty of fact, and its morals are good; but because of the hardness of their hearts, they came not up to the primitive purity, as in case of polygamy and divorce, wherein our blessed Saviour reduces them to the original, that from the beginning it was not so; and in several other cases mentioned in his Sermon upon the Mount:

Therefore the perfection of morals, and of the true knowledge of God, was reserved for the Christian religion, which has, in more abundant manner than even the Jewish, the infallible marks of the truth of the facts, in the multitude and notoriety of the miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour beyond those of Moses. Which fully answers the objection of the Jews, that Christ wrought his miracles by Beelzebub: for then, as he said to them, "By whom do your children cast out devils?" Was it by the spirit of God or Beelzebub, that Moses and the prophets wrought their miracles?

Then from the purity and heavenliness of his doctrines, all levelled to destroy the kingdom of Satan, those wicked principles and idolatrous worship which he had set up in the world; the other answer of our blessed Saviour concludes demonstratively, of a kingdom divided against itself; that if Satan cast out Satan to promote that doctrine which Christ taught, we must alter our notion of the devil, and suppose him to be good, and his kingdom

must then be at an end; which we see not yet done, for wickedness still reigns in the world.

IV. OBJECT. AS TO THE HOLY TRINITY.

Against these things reason has nothing to object, but then prejudices are raised up against what is revealed, as being of things that are above our reason, and out of its reach; as chiefly the doctrine of the blessed Trinity.

In answer to which we may consider, that if such things were not above our reason, there needed no revelation of them, but only a bare proposal of them to our reason, made by any body without any authority, and their own evidence would carry them through.

In the next place, we must acknowledge that there are many things in the divine nature far out of the reach of our reason. That it must be so: for how can finite comprehend infinite? Who can think what eternity is? A duration without beginning, or succession of parts or time! Who can so much as imagine or frame any idea of a being, neither made by itself, nor by any other? Of omnipresence? Of a boundless immensity? &c.

Yet all this reason obliges us to allow, as the necessary consequences of a first cause.

And where any thing is established upon the full proof of reason, there ten thousand objections or difficulties, though we cannot answer them, are of no force at all to overthrow it. Nothing can do that, but to refute those reasons upon which it is established; till when the truth and certainty of the thing remains unshaken, though we cannot explain it, nor solve the difficulties that arise from it.

And if it is so, upon the point of reason, much more upon that of revelation, where the subject matter is above our reason, and could never have been found out by it.

All to be done in that case is, to satisfy ourselves of the truth of the fact, that such things were revealed of God, and are no imposture. This is done, as to the Holy Scriptures, by the four marks before-mentioned.

And as to the contradiction alledged in three being one, it is no contradiction, unless it be said, that three are one, in the self-same respect: for in divers respects there is no sort of difficulty, that one may be three, or three thousand; as one army may consist of many thousands, and yet it is but one army: there is but

one human nature, and yet there are multitudes of persons who partake of that nature.

Now it is not said that the three persons in the divine nature are one person, that would be a contradiction: but it is said, that the three persons are one nature. They are not three and one in the same respect; they are three as to persons, and one as to nature. Here is no contradiction.

Again, that may be a contradiction in one nature, which is not so in another: for example; it is a contradiction that a man can go two yards or miles as soon as one, because two is but one and another one: yet this is no contradiction to sight, which can reach a star as soon as the top of a chimney; and the sun darts his rays in one instant from heaven to earth: but more than all these is the motion of thought, to which no distance of place is any interruption; which can arrive at Japan as soon as at a yard's distance; and can run into the immensity of possibilities.

Now, there are no words possible, whereby to give any notion or idea of sight or light to a man born blind: and consequently to reconcile the progress of sight or light to him from being an absolute contradiction; because he can measure it no otherwise than according to the motion of legs or arms, for he knows none other: therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in one nature, which is so in another, unless we understand both natures perfectly well: and therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in the incomprehensible nature of being three in one, though we found it to be so in our nature; which we do not, because, as before said, they are not three and one in the same respect.

Now, let us further consider, that though there is no comparison between finite and infinite, yet we have nearer resemblances of the three and one in God, than there is of sight to a man born blind. For there is nothing in any of the other four senses that has any resemblance at all to that of seeing, or that can give such a man any notion whatever of it.

But we find in our own nature, which is said to be made after the image of God, a very near resemblance of his Holy Trinity, and of the different operations of each of the Divine Persons.

For example; to know a thing present, and to remember what is past, and to love or hate, are different operations of our mind, and performed by different faculties of it. Of these, the understanding is the father faculty, and gives being to things, as to us;

for what we know not, is to us as if it were not. This answers to creation. From this faculty proceeds the second, that of memory, which is a preserving of what the understanding has created to us. Then the third faculty, that of the will, which loves or hates, proceeds from both the other; for we cannot love or hate what is not first created by the understanding, and preserved to us by the memory.

And though these are different faculties, and their operations different, that the second proceeds from the first, or is begotten by it; and the third proceeds from the first and second in conjunction, so that one is before the other in order of nature, yet not in time; for they are all congenial, and one is as soon in the soul as the other; and yet they make not three souls, but one soul. And though their operations are different, and the one proceeds from the other, yet no one can act without the other, and they all concur to every act of each; for in understanding and remembering, there is a concurrent act of the will to consent to such understanding or remembering, so that no one can act without the other; in which sense none is before or after the other, nor can any of them be or exist without the other.

But what we call faculties in the soul, we call persons in the Godhead; because there are personal actions attributed to each of them; as that of sending, and being sent; to take flesh, and be born, &c.

And we have no other word whereby to express it; we speak it after the manner of men; nor could we understand, if we heard any of those unspeakable words, which express the Divine Nature in its proper essence; therefore we must make allowances, and great ones, when we apply words of our nature to the infinite and eternal Being. We must not argue strictly and philosophically from them, more than from God's being said to repent, to be angry, &c. They are words *ad captum*, in condescension to our weak capacities, and without which we could not understand.

But this I say, that there are nearer resemblances afforded to us of this ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity, than there is betwixt one of our outward senses and another, than there is to a blind man of colours, or of the motion of light or sight: and a contradiction in the one will not infer a contradiction in the other: though it is impossible to be solved, as in the instance before given of a man born blind, till we come to know both natures distinctly.

And if we had not the experience of the different faculties of our mind, the contradiction would appear irreconcilable to all our philosophy, how three could be one, each distinct from the other, yet but one soul: one proceeding from, or being begot by the other; and yet all coeval, and none before or after the other: and as to the difference betwixt faculties and persons, substance and subsistence, it is a puzzling piece of philosophy. And though we give not a distinct subsistence to a faculty, it has an existence, and one faculty can no more be another, than one person can be another: so that the case seems to be alike in both, as to what concerns our present difficulty of three and one; besides what before is said, that by the word person, when applied to God, (for want of a proper word whereby to express it) we must mean something infinitely different from personality among men. And therefore from a contradiction in the one (suppose it granted) we cannot charge a contradiction in the other, unless we understand it as well as the other; for how else can we draw the parallel?

What a vain thing is our philosophy, when we would measure the incomprehensible nature by it! When we find it non-plust in our own nature, and that in many instances. If I am all in one room, is it not a contradiction that any part of me should be in another room? Yet it was a common saying among philosophers, that the soul is all in all, and all in every part of the body: how is the same individual soul present, at one and the same time, to actuate the distant members of the body, without either multiplication or division of the soul? Is there any thing in the body can bear any resemblance to this, without a manifest contradiction? Nay, even as to bodies, is any thing more a self-evident principle, than that the cause must be before the effect? Yet the light and heat of the sun are as old as the sun; and supposing the sun to be eternal, they would be as eternal.

And as light and heat are of the nature of the sun, and as the three faculties before-mentioned are of the nature of the soul, so that the soul could not be a soul if it wanted any of them; so may we, from small things to great, apprehend without any contradiction, that the three persons are of the very nature and essence of the Deity; and so of the same substance with it; and though one proceeding from the other, (as the faculties of the soul do) yet that all three are consubstantial, co-eternal, and of necessary existence as God is; for that these three are God, and God is

these three. As understanding, memory and will are a soul ; and a soul is understanding, memory and will.

I intend (God willing) to treat of this subject more largely by itself ; but I have said thus much here, to clear the way from that objection of rejecting revelation, (though we are infallibly sure of the fact) because of the supposed contradiction to our reason, in comparing it with our earthly things.

v. Of the Differences among Christians.

But now, that from all the proofs of the certainty of the revelation we are come to fix in Christianity, our labour is not yet at an end: for here you see multiplicity of sects and divisions, which our blessed Saviour foretold should come, for the probation of the elect: as some Canaanites were left in the land to teach the Israelites the use of war, lest by too profound a peace, they might grow lazy and stupid, and become an easy prey to their enemies. So might Christianity be lost among us ; if we had nothing to do, it would dwindle and decay, and corrupt by degrees, as water stagnates by standing still: but when we are put to contend earnestly for the faith, it quickens our zeal, keeps us upon our guard, trims our lamp, and furbishes the sword of the spirit, which might otherwise rust in its scabbard. And it gives great opportunity to shew us the wonderful providence and protection of God over his church, in preserving her against a visibly unequal force. And in this contest, to some this high privilege is granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*. These go to make up the noble army of martyrs and confessors, for ever triumphant in heaven. Others conquer even here on earth, that God's wonderful doings may be known to the children of men.

But as he who builds a tower, ought first to compute the expence, and he who goes to war to consider his strength ; so our blessed Saviour has instructed us, that he who will be his disciple, must resolve beforehand to take up his cross daily, to forsake father and mother, and wife and children, and lands and life itself, when he cannot keep them with the truth and sincerity of the Gospel. Therefore we must put on the " whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day, and having overcome all, to stand ; for we wrestle not against flesh and

* Phil. i. 29.

“ blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.”

And what is it we wrestle for ! For the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, &c.

VI. *The Doctrine of SATISFACTION.*

Here is the foundation of the Christian religion, that when man had sinned, and was utterly unable to make any satisfaction for his sin, God sent his own son to take upon him our flesh, and in the same nature that offended, to make full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, by his perfect obedience, and the sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

Some say, What need any satisfaction ? Might not God forgive without it ? It would shew greater mercy. But these men consider not that God is not only just, but he is justice itself ; justice in the abstract ; he is essential justice. And justice, by its nature, must exact to the utmost farthing, else it were not justice : to remit is mercy, it is not justice : and the attributes of God must not fight and oppose each other ; they must all stand infinite and compleat. You may say then, how can God forgive at all ? How can infinite mercy and justice stand together ?

This question could never have been answered, if God himself had not shewed it to us in the wonderful œconomy of our redemption : for here is his justice satisfied to the least iota, by the perfect obedience and passion of Christ, (who is God) in the same human nature that offended. Here is infinite wisdom expressed in this means found out for our salvation ; and infinite mercy in affording it to us. Thus all his attributes are satisfied, and filled up to the brim : they contradict not, but exalt each other. His mercy exalts and magnifies his justice : his justice exalts his mercy, and both his infinite wisdom.

Here is a view of God, beyond what all the oracles of reason could ever have found out, from his works of creation or common providence ! These shew his works, but this his nature, it is himself ! The very face of God ! Before which the angels veil their faces, and desire to look into this abyss of goodness and power, and wisdom, which they never will be able to fathom, but still feed upon, and search farther and farther into it, with adoration, to eternity ! And they worship our manhood thus taken into God ! And rejoice to be ministring spirits to us, while upon earth.

This you and I have talked over at large; and this I gave you as the sum and substance, the Alpha and Oméga, of the Christian religion. And now I repeat it as the surest criterion to guide a man in the difficulty before us, that is, in the choice of a church, in the midst of all that variety there is among Christians. Whoever hold not this doctrine, join not with them, nor bid them God speed.

VII. THE SOCINIANS.

This will save you from the Socinians, or the Unitarians, as they now call themselves in England, who expressly deny this doctrine: for they deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the Divinity of Christ, upon which it is founded. They consider Christ no otherwise than a mere man; and propose him only as a teacher and good example to us. But then they are confounded with all their pretence to wit and reason, to give any account for his death, which was not necessary to teaching, or being an example: that, an angel, or a prophet might have been. Then they say that he died to confirm the truth of his doctrine. But set this doctrine of Satisfaction aside, and he taught nothing new, except the improvement of some morals: besides, dying does not confirm the truth of any doctrine; it only shews that he who dies for it does himself believe it. Some have died for errors; and the Socinian doctrine affords no comfort, no assurance to us. For if we consider Christ only as a teacher or example, we have not followed his precepts nor example: here is nothing but matter of condemnation to us. But if we look upon him as our surety, who has paid our debt, as our sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our sins, and that we are saved by his blood, (which is the language of the Holy Scriptures, of which the Socinians know no meaning) this is a rock and infallible assurance.

VIII. THE CHURCH OF ROME.

As the Socinians have totally rejected this doctrine, so the Church of Rome has greatly vitiated and depressed it, by their doctrine of merit, and their own satisfaction, which they make part of their sacrament of penance. On this is founded their purgatory, wherein souls who had not made full satisfaction upon earth, must compleat it there. They deny not the Satisfaction of Christ, but join their own with it, as if it were not sufficient.

IX: THE DISSENTERS.

On the other hand, our Dissenters run to the contrary extreme: and because our good works must have no share in the satisfaction for sin, which they cannot, as being unworthy, and mixed with our infirmities and our sin; therefore they make them not necessary, nor of any effect towards our salvation. They say that Christ did not die for any but the elect, in whom he sees no sin, let them live never so wickedly. They damn the far greatest part of the world by irreversible decrees of reprobation, and say, that their good works are hateful to God, and that it is not possibly in their power to be saved, let them believe as they will, and live never so religiously. They take away free-will in man, and make him a perfect machine. They make God the author of sin, to create men on purpose to damn them; and to punish them eternally for not doing what was not in their power to do, and for doing what he had made impossible for them not to do. They make his promises and threatenings to be of no effect, nay, to be a sort of burlesquing, and insulting those whom he has made miserable; which is an hideous blasphemy!

For a solution in this matter, both as to faith and works, I refer you to the homilies of faith and salvation, and of good works, where you will find the true Christian doctrine set forth clearly and solidly.

I will not anticipate what you design for your second part, by entering into other disputes there are among Christians; only these will be exceeding necessary, to settle well the notion of the Church of Christ, to which all do pretend in various manners.

X. THE TRUE NOTION OF THE CHURCH.

First therefore, the church must be considered not only as a sect, that is, a company of people believing such and such tenets, like the several sects of the Heathen Philosophers; but as a society under government, with governors appointed by Christ, invested with such powers and authority, to admit into and exclude out of the society, and govern the affairs of the body.

This power was delegated by Christ to his Apostles and their successors to the end of the world: accordingly the Apostles did ordain Bishops in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world, as the supreme governors, and center of unity, each in his own church. These were obliged to keep unity and

communion with one another; which is therefore called Catholic Communion. And all these churches considered together, is the Catholic Church: as the several nations of the earth are called the world.

XI. OF AN UNIVERSAL BISHOP.

And Christ appointed no Universal Bishop over his church more than an Universal Monarch over the world. No such thing was known in the primitive church, till it was set up first by John Bishop of Constantinople, then by the Bishop of Rome, in the seventh century. And as the whole world is one kingdom to God, as it is written, "his kingdom ruleth over all," so the several churches of the world are one church to Christ. And the Church of Rome's saying that she is that one church, or shew us another, which can dispute it with us, in universality, antiquity, &c. is the same as if France (for example) should say, Who can compare with me? Therefore I am the Universal or Monarch, shew me another. The thing appears ridiculous at the first proposal; for it must be said to Rome, or to France, that if you were ten times greater than you are, you are yet but a part of the whole. And to say, who else pretends to it? Why none. And it would be nonsense in any one who did pretend to it. One part may be bigger than another; but one part can never be the whole. And all results in this, whether Christ did appoint an Universal Bishop over all the churches in the world? And we are willing to leave the issue to that, if it can appear either from the scripture or antiquity. Besides, the reason of the thing; for as Gregory the Great urged against John of Constantinople, if there was an Universal Bishop, the Universal Church must fall, if that one Universal Bishop fell; and so all must come to center in one poor, fallible, mortal man.

This obliged the Pope to run into another monstrous extreme, and set up for infallibility in his own person, as the only successor of St. Peter, and heir of those promises made to him, *super hanc Petram, &c.* This was the current doctrine of the divines in the Church of Rome, in former ages, as you may see in Bellarmin, *de Rom. Pontif. l. 4, c. 5.* where he carries this so high as to assert, that if the Pope did command the practice of vice, and forbid virtue, the church were bound to believe that virtue was vice, and that vice was virtue. And in his preface he calls this absolute supremacy of the Pope, the *summa rei Christianæ*,

the sum and foundation of the Christian religion. And that to deny it was not only a simple error, but a pernicious heresy.

This was old Popery: but now it is generally decried by the papists themselves; yet no Pope has been brought to renounce it, they will not quit claim.

When they departed from the infallibility of the Pope, they sought to place it in their General Councils: but these are not always in being; and so their infallibility must drop for several ages together; which will not consist with their argument, that God is obliged by his goodness, to afford always an outward and living judge and guide to his church. Besides, that instances are found, where those councils they call general, have contradicted one another.

For which reasons, others of them place the infallibility in the church diffusive: but this upon their scheme is indefinite, and the judge of controversy must be sought among numberless individuals, of whom no one is the judge or guide.

XII. OF INFALLIBILITY IN THE CHURCH.

But there is an infallibility in the church, not personal in any one or all of Christians put together; for millions of fallibles can never make an infallible. But the infallibility consists in the nature of the evidence, which having all the four marks mentioned in the Short Method with the Deists, cannot possibly be false. As you and I believe there is such a town as Constantinople, that there was such a man as Henry VIII. as much as if we had seen them with our eyes: not from the credit of any historian or traveller, all of whom are fallible; but from the nature of the evidence, wherein it is impossible for men to have conspired and carried it on without contradiction, if it were false.

Thus, whatever doctrine has been taught in the church (according to the rule of Vincentius Lirinensis) *semper, ubique, & ab omnibus*, is the Christian doctrine; for in this case, such doctrine is a fact, and having the aforesaid marks, must be a true fact, viz. that such doctrine was so taught and received.

This was the method taken in the council called at Alexandria against Arius; it was asked by Alexander the Archbishop who presided, "*Quis unquam talia audivit *?*" Who ever heard of this doctrine before? And it being answered by all the Bishops

* Socrates Hist. l. t. c. 5, Gr.

there assembled in the negative, it was concluded a novel doctrine, and contrary to what had been universally received in the Christian Church. Thus every doctrine may be reduced to fact; for it is purely fact, whether such doctrine was received or not.

And a council assembled upon such an occasion, stand as evidences of the fact, not as judges of the faith; which they cannot alter by their votes or authority.

A council has authority in matters of discipline in the church; but in matters of faith, what is called their authority, is their attestation to the truth of fact; which if it has the marks before-mentioned must be infallibly true: not from the infallibility of any or all of the persons, but from the nature of the evidence, as before is said.

And this is the surest rule, whereby to judge of doctrines, and to know what the Catholic Church has believed and taught, as received from the Apostles.

And they who refuse to be tried by this rule, who say, we care not what was believed by the Catholic Church, either in former ages or now; we think our own interpretations or criticisms upon such a text, of as great authority as theirs; these are justly to be suspected, nay, it is evident that they are broaching some novel doctrines, which cannot stand this test. Besides the monstrous arrogance in such a pretence, these overthrow the foundation of that sure and infallible evidence upon which Christianity itself does stand; and reduce all to a blind enthusiasm.

XIII. OF EPISCOPACY.

But further, Sir, in your search after a church, you must not only consider the doctrine, but the government; that is, as I said before, you must consider the church, not only as a sect, but as a society: for though every society founded upon the belief of such tenets, may be called a sect, yet every sect is not a society. Now, a society cannot be without government, for it is that which makes a society: and a government cannot be without governors. The Apostles were instituted by Christ the first governors of his church; and with them and their successors he has promised to be to the end of the world. The Apostles did ordain Bishops, as governors in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world; and these Bishops were esteemed the successors of the Apostles each in his own church, from the beginning to this day. This was the current notion and language of antiquity.

Omnes Apostolorum successores sunt. That all Bishops were the successors of the Apostles. As St. Jerome speaks, *Epist. ad Evagr.* And St. Ignatius, who was constituted by the Apostles Bishop of Antioch, salutes the church of the Trallians, *Ἐν τῷ πληρώματι ἐν Ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτήρι.* *In the plenitude of the Apostolical character.* Thus it continued from the days of the Apostles to those of John Calvin: in all which time there was not any one church in the whole Christian world, that was not episcopal. But now it is said by our Dissenters, that there is no need of succession from the Apostles, or those Bishops instituted by them; that they can make governors over themselves whom they list: and what signifies the government of the church, so the doctrine be pure? But this totally dissolves the church as a society, the government of which consists in the right and title of the governor. And as the Apostle says, “No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*.” And the dispute betwixt him and Korah was not as to any point either of doctrine or worship, but merely upon that of church government. And St. Jude, verse 11, brings down the same case to that of the church. And reason carries it as to all societies. They who will not obey the lawful governor, but set up another in opposition to him, are no longer of the society, but enemies to it, and justly forfeit all the rights and privileges of it.

Now considering that all the promises in the Gospel are made to the church, what a dreadful thing it must be, to be excluded from all these!

Besides, the church is called the pillar and ground of the truth, as being a society instituted by Christ, for the support and preservation of the faith. This no particular church can attribute to itself, otherwise than as being a part of the whole: and therefore, as St. Cyprian says, “Christ made the college of Bishops numerous, that if one proved heretical, or sought to devour the flock, the rest might interpose for the saving of it.” This is equally against letting the whole depend upon one Universal Bishop; and against throwing of the whole episcopate, that is, all the Bishops in the world; which would be a total dissolution of the church as a society, by leaving no governors in it; or, which is the same, setting up governors of our own head, without any authority or succession from the Apostles; which is ren-

* Heb. v. 4.

dering the whole precarious, and without any foundation. And it is a supposing that Providence is more obliged to stand by a church set up in direct opposition to his institution, than by that church which Christ himself has founded, and promised to be with it to the end of the world. And though he has permitted errors and heresies to overspread several parts of it, at several times, for the probation of the elect, like the waning of the moon, yet has he not left himself without witness, and has restored light to her, pursuant to his promise, that the gates of hell should not prevail against her: and this by the means of his servants and substitutes, the Bishops of his church, whom he has not deserted. All of whom, through the whole world always did, and still do maintain and own the Apostolick Creed. And wherein some, as the Arians, have perverted the sense of some articles, that lasted but a short time; and the truth has been more confirmed by it, in the unanimous consent and testimony of the whole episcopal college, to the primitive doctrine which they had received from the beginning. God healed these heresies in his own way, by the Bishops and Governors of his church, whom he had appointed, and without any infraction upon his own institution.

And it is observable that these heresies began by infraction, which men made upon his institution of Bishops, as Arius, an ambitious presbyter, first rose up against his Bishop, before he was given up to that vile heresy, which he vented afterwards by degrees, to gain a party after him, thereby to maintain the opposition which he had made against his Bishop; and, by a just judgment, he fell from one error to another, till he at last compleated that detestable heresy which bears his name.

And in all the annals of the church, whether under the law or the gospel, there is not one instance of a schism against the priesthood which God had appointed; but great errors in doctrine and worship did follow it. Thus the priesthood which Micah set up of his own head, and that which Jeroboam set up in opposition to that of Aaron, both ended in idolatry. Thus the Novatians and Donatists, who made schisms against their Bishops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

And into what gross errors, both as to doctrine and worship, has the church of Rome fallen, since her Bishop set up for universality, and thereby commenced that grand schism against all the Bishops of the earth, whom he sought to depress under him; but

while he would thrust other churches from him, he thrust himself from the Catholic church.

What hydra heresies, and monstrous sects (fifty or sixty at one time, of which we have the names) flowed like a torrent into England, in the times of forty-one, after episcopacy was thrown down!

So evident is that saying, that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the episcopal authority.

XIV. AN INFALLIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF EPISCOPACY.

For which this is to be said, that it has all the four marks before-mentioned, to ascertain any fact, in the concurrent testimony of all churches, at all times; and therefore must infallibly be the government which the Apostles left upon the earth. To which we must adhere till a greater authority than theirs shall alter it.

I doubt not but all this will determine you to the church of England, and keep you firm to episcopacy, as a matter not indifferent.

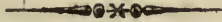
And I pray God, that "he who hath begun a good work in you, may perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. Amen."

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

QUALIFICATIONS REQUISITE TO
ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENTS.



The Necessity of an outward Commission to the Ministers of the Gospel.

SOME Quakers having perused my discourse of Baptism, think the Quaker arguments against it sufficiently answered; and they have but one difficulty remaining, that is, who they are (among the various pretenders) that are duly qualified to administer it.

And if satisfaction can be given to them herein, they promise a perfect compliance to that holy institution.

The chief thing they seem to stand upon is, the personal holiness of the administrator, thinking that the spiritual effects of baptism cannot be conveyed by the means of an un sanctified instrument.

But yet they confess that there is something else necessary besides the personal holiness of the administrator: otherwise they would think themselves as much qualified to administer it as any others; because, I presume, they suppose themselves to have as great a measure of the Spirit as other men.

This requisite which they want is that of lawful ordination.

But the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists do pretend to this; therefore their title to it is to be examined.

And, that we may proceed the more clearly in this matter with respect still to that difficulty upon which the Quakers lay the stress, we will enquire concerning those qualifications which are

requisite in any person that shall take upon him to administer the sacraments of Christ's institution. And,

These qualifications are of two sorts, personal or sacerdotal.

1. Personal ; the holiness of the administrator. And though this is a great qualification to fit and prepare a man for such an holy administration, yet this alone does not sufficiently qualify any man to take upon him such an administration.

2. But there is moreover required, a sacerdotal qualification ; that is, an outward commission to authorise a man to execute any sacerdotal or ministerial act of religion: For, " This honour no man, taketh unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," Heb. v. 4. " So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest ; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son—Thou art a priest, &c."

Accordingly, we find that Christ did not take upon him the office of a preacher, till after that outward commission given to him by a voice from heaven at his baptism ; for it is written, Matt. iv. 17, " From that time Jesus began to preach : " Then he began, and he was then " about thirty years of age." Luke iii. 23. Now no man can doubt of Christ's qualifications before that time, as to holiness, sufficiency, and all personal endowments. And if all these were not sufficient to Christ himself without an outward commission, what other man can pretend to it upon the account of any personal excellencies in himself without an outward commission ?

3. And as Christ was outwardly commissioned by his Father, so did not he leave it to his disciples, to every one's opinion of his own sufficiency to thrust himself into the vineyard ; but chose twelve Apostles by name, and after them seventy others of an inferior order, whom he sent to preach.

4. And as Christ gave outward commissions while he was upon the earth, so we find that his Apostles did proceed in the same method after his ascension. Acts xiv. 23. " They ordained them " elders in every church."

5. But had they who were thus ordained by the Apostles, power to ordain others ? Yes, Titus i. 5. 1 Tim. v. 22. " For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in " every city. Lay hands suddenly on no man, &c." St. Clement, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, writing concerning the schism which was then risen up amongst them, says, parag. 44, " That the Apostles foreknowing there would be contests

“ concerning the episcopal name, (or office) did themselves appoint the persons:” and not only so, lest that might be said to be of force only during their time; but that they “ afterwards established an order how, when those whom they had ordained should die, others, fit and approved men, should succeed them in their ministry.” Par. 43. “ That they who were intrusted with this work by God in Christ, did constitute these officers.”

– But this matter depends not upon the testimony of him, or many more that might be produced: it is such a public matter of fact, that I might as well go about to quote particular authors to prove that there were Emperors in Rome, as that the Ministers of the church of Christ were ordained to succeed one another, and that they did so succeed.

The deduction of this commission is continued in the succession of Bishops, and not of Presbyters.

But here is a dispute whether this succession was preserved in the order of Bishops or Presbyters? Or whether both are not the same?

1. This is the contest betwixt the Presbyterians and us; but either way it operates against the Quakers, who allow of no succession derived by outward ordination.

2. But because the design of this discourse is to shew the succession from the Apostles, I answer that this succession is preserved and derived only in the Bishops; as the continuance of any society is deduced in the succession of the chief governors of the society, not of the inferior officers. Thus in kingdoms we reckon by the succession of the kings, not of sheriffs or constables; and in corporations by the succession of the mayors, or other chief officers, not of the inferior bailiffs or serjeants: so the succession of the churches is computed in the succession of the Bishops, who are the chief governors of the churches; and not of presbyters, who are but inferior officers under the Bishops.

3. And in this the matter of fact is as clear and evident as the succession of any kings or corporations in the world.

To begin with the Apostles; we find not only that they constituted Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete, as in the subscriptions of St. Paul's epistles to them, but in Eusebius, and other ecclesiastical historians, you have the Bishops named who were constituted by the Apostles themselves over the then famous

churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, and many other churches, and the succession of them down all along.

St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was disciple to St. John the Apostle; and St. Irenæus, who was disciple to St. Polycarp, was constituted Bishop of Lyons in France.

I mention this because it is so near us; for in all other churches throughout the whole world wherever Christianity was planted, episcopacy was every where established without one exception as is evident from all their records.

And so it was with us in England, whither it is generally supposed, and with very good grounds, that St. Paul first brought the Christian faith. Clemens Romanus, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, sect. 5, says, that St. Paul went preaching the Gospel to the farthest bounds of the west, ἐπὶ τὸ τέρμα τῆς Δύσεως, by which term Britain was then understood: and Theodoret expressly names the Britons among the nations converted by the Apostles, (tom. 4, serm. 9, page 610); and Eusebius in his evangelical demonstration, (l. 3, c. 7, p. 113) names likewise the Britons as then converted.

But whether St. Paul, or, as some conjecture, Joseph of Arimathea, or any other apostolical person was the first who preached Christ in England, it matters not, as to our present purpose, who enquire only concerning episcopacy; and it is certain by all our histories, that as far up as they give us any account of Christianity in this island, they tell us likewise of Bishops; and the succession of this Church of England has been deduced in the succession of Bishops, and not of Presbyters; and particularly in the diocese of London, which was the first achiepiscopal see before Augustine the monk came hither, after which it was established in Canterbury. And the Saxon writers have transmitted the succession of their Bishops in Canterbury, Rochester, London, &c.

And in countries so remote and barbarous as Island itself, we find the same care taken; Ara or Aras, an Islandish priest, surnamed Hinfrode the Learned, who flourished in the eleventh century, and was twenty-five years old when Christianity was brought thither, in his book of that country written in Islandish, has transmitted to posterity, not only the succession, but the genealogies of the Bishops of Skalholt and Hola (the two episcopal sees of Island) as they succeeded one another in his time. I mention this of Island, to shew that episcopacy has extended itself equally with Christianity, which was carried by it into the remotest cor-

ners of the earth; upon which account the Bishops of Skalholt and Høla, and their succession, are as remarkable proofs of episcopacy, though not so famous as the Bishops of Canterbury and London.

4. If the Presbyterians will say (because they have nothing left to say) that all London (for example) was but one parish, and that the Presbyter of every other parish was as much a Bishop as the Bishop of London, because the words *Επίσκοπος* and *Πρεσβύτερος*, Bishop and Presbyter, are sometimes used in the same sense; they may as well prove that Christ was but a Deacon, because he is so called, Romans xv. 8, *Διάκονος*, which we rightly translate a Minister: and Bishop signifies an overseer, and Presbyter an ancient man, or elder man; whence our term of alderman. And this is as good a foundation to prove that the Apostles were aldermen, in the city acceptance of the word, or that our aldermen are all Bishops and Apostles, as to prove that Presbyters and Bishops are all one from the childish jingle of the words.

It would be the same thing if one should undertake to confront all antiquity, and prove against all the histories, that the Emperors of Rome were no more than generals of armies, and that every Roman general was Emperor of Rome, because he could find the word *Imperator* sometimes applied to the general of an army.

Or as if a commonwealth-man should get up and say, that our former kings were no more than our dukes are now, because the style of grace, which is now given to dukes, was then given to kings.

And suppose that any one were put under the penance of answering to such ridiculous arguments, what method would he take but to shew that the Emperors of Rome, and former Kings of England, had generals of armies and dukes under them, and exercised authority over them?

Therefore when we find it given in charge to Timothy, the first Bishop of Ephesus, how he was to proceed against his Presbyters when they transgressed, to sit in judgment upon them, examine witnesses against them, and pass censures upon them, it is a most impertinent logomachy to argue from the etymology of the words, that notwithstanding of all this a Bishop and a Presbyter are the same thing: therefore that one text, 1 Timothy v. 19. is sufficient to silence this pitiful clamour of the Presbyterians; our English reads it "against an elder," which is the literal translation of the word "Presbyter," *κατὰ πρεσβυτέρου*, against a

“ Presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses; and them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Now, upon the Presbyterian hypothesis, we must say that Timothy had no authority or jurisdiction over that Presbyter, against whom he had power to receive accusations, examine witnesses, and pass censures upon him; and that such a Presbyter had the same authority over Timothy; which is so extravagant and against common sense, that I will not stay longer to confute it, and think this enough to have said concerning the Presbyterian argument from the etymology of the words Bishop and Presbyter.

And this likewise confutes their other pretence which I have mentioned, that the ancient bishoprics were only single and independent congregations or parishes. This is a topic they have taken up but of late, being beaten from all their other holds, and launched by Mr. David Clarkson, in a book which he entitles *Primitive Episcopacy*; which has given occasion to an excellent answer by Dr. Henry Maurice, called *A Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy*, printed 1691, which I suppose has ended that controversy, and hindered the world from being more troubled on that head. And their other little shift, and as groundless, that the Primitive Bishops were no other than their moderators advanced more lately, by Gilb. Rule, late moderator of the general assembly in Scotland, has been as learnedly, and with great clearness of reason, confuted by the worthy J. S. in his *Principles of the Cyprianic age*, printed 1695.

But as I said, that text, 1 Tim. v. 19. has made all these pretences wholly useless to the Presbyterians: for supposing their most notorious false supposition, as if the bishoprics of Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, or London, consisted but of one single congregation, and that such Bishops had no Presbyters under them; but that all Presbyters were equally Bishops; I say, supposing this, then it must follow from what we read of Timothy, that one Bishop or Presbyter had jurisdiction over other Bishops or Presbyters, which will destroy the Presbyterian claim of parity, as much as their confession to the truth, and plain matter of fact, that Bishops had Presbyters under their jurisdiction, and that they were distinct orders. Notwithstanding that a Bishop may be called *Διακόνος*, a deacon or minister of Christ; and likewise *Πρεσβύτερος*, an elder or grave man, which is a term of magistracy and dignity, and not tied to age: and a Presbyter may likewise in a sound

sense be called a Bishop, that is an overseer or shepherd, which he truly is over his particular flock, without denying at all his dependence upon his Bishop and overseer.

5. As under the term of Priest the High-priest was included, without destroying his supremacy over the other Priests, against which Korah and his Presbyters, or inferior Priests arose. And if the Presbyterians will take his word, whom of all the Fathers they most admire, and quote often on their side, that is St. Jerome, he will tell them in that very Epistle (*ad Evagr.*) which they boast favours them so much, that what Aaron and his sons, and the Levites were in the temple, that same are Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon in the church.

And long before him, Clemens Romanus, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, makes frequent allusion to the episcopacy of the Levitical priesthood, and argues from thence to that of the Christian church. Thus paragraph 40. "To the High-priests, (says he) were allotted his proper offices: to the Priests their proper place was assigned; and to the Levites their services were appointed; and the laymen were restrained within the precepts to laymen." And sect. 42, he applies that scripture, Isa. lx: 17. to the officers of the Christian church, and renders it thus; "I will constitute their Bishops in righteousness, and their Deacons in faith." The Greek translation of the LXX has it thus. "I will give thee rulers (or princes) in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness."

It was the frequent method of these Primitive Fathers to reason thus from the parallel betwixt the law and the gospel; the one being the exact type of the other, and therefore being fulfilled in the other. And in this they followed the example of Christ and the Apostles, who argued in the same manner: as you may see Matt. v. 1 Cor. x. the whole epistle to the Hebrews, and many other places of the New Testament.

6. Now the Presbyterians are desired to shew any one disparity betwixt their case and that of Korah, who was a Priest of the second order, that is, a Presbyter, and withdrew his obedience from the High-priest, with other mutinous Levites: for there was no matter of doctrine or worship betwixt them and Aaron, nor any other dispute but that of church government. And by the parallel betwixt the Old Testament and the New, Korah was a Presbyterian, who rose up against the episcopacy of Aaron. But this case is brought yet nearer home; for we are told, (Jude,

verse 11.) of those under the gospel, “ who perish in the gain-
 “ saying of Korah.” And in the epistle of Clem. Rom. to the
 Corinthians before quoted, sect. 43, he plainly applies this case
 of Korah to the state of the Christian church; shewing at large,
 that as Moses by the command of God determined the pretensions
 of the twelve tribes to the glory of the priesthood, by the mira-
 culous budding of Aaron’s rod, which was after the schism and
 punishment of Korah and his company; so likewise, he says,
 the Apostles foreknowing by Christ that dissensions would also
 arise in the Christian church by various pretenders to the evange-
 lical priesthood, did settle and establish not only the persons them-
 selves, but gave rules and orders for continuing the succession after
 their deaths, as I have before quoted his words. So that it is
 plain from hence, that the evangelical priesthood is as positively
 and certainly established and determined in the succession of eccle-
 siastical ordination, as the Levitical law was in the succession of
 Aaron; and consequently that the rebellion of Presbyters from
 under the government of their Bishops, is the same case as the
 rebellion (for so it is called, Numb. xvii. 10.) of Korah and his
 Levites against Aaron; who had as good a pretence against him
 from the word Levite, which was common to the whole tribe,
 as the Presbyterians have against Bishops, from the name Bishop
 and Presbyter being used sometimes promiscuously, and applied
 to the clergy in general; which is a term that includes all the
 orders of the church, as Levite did among the Jews.

7. But to leave the fruitless contest about words, let this matter
 be determined as other matters of fact are.

If I pretend to succeed any man in an honour or estate, I
 must name him who had such an estate or honour before me,
 and the man who had it before him, and who had it before him;
 and so up all the way to him who first had it, and from whom
 all the rest do derive, and how it was lawfully deduced from one
 to another.

This the Bishops have done, as I have shewn, and can name
 all the way backward, as far as history goes, from the present
 Bishop of London, for example, to the first plantation of Chris-
 tianity in this kingdom; so from the present Bishop of Lyons up
 to Irenæus the disciple of St. Polycarp, as before is told. The
 records are yet more certain in the great bishoprics of Rome,
 Antioch, Alexandria, and others, while they lasted in the world.
 And though the records may not be extant of every small bishopric,

which was less taken notice of, as the names of many kings are lost in obscure nations, of many mayors or sheriffs, who notwithstanding have as certainly succeeded one another, as where the records are preserved: I say, though every Bishop in the world cannot tell the names of all his predecessors up to the Apostles, yet their succession is certain: and in most Christians nations there are Bishops who can do it; which is a sufficient proof for the rest, all standing upon the same bottom, and being derived in the same manner.

Now to balance this, it is desired that the Presbyterians would shew the succession of any one Presbyter in the world, who was not likewise a Bishop, in our acceptation of the word; in the like manner from the Apostles.

Till when, their small criticisms upon the etymology of the words Bishop or Presbyter, is as a poor plea, as if I should pretend to be heir to an estate, from the likeness of my name to somebody who once had it.

And here I cannot chuse but apply the complaint of our Saviour, John v. 43. "If any come in the name of Christ; that is, by a commission from him, derived down all the way by regular ordination, "him ye will not receive:" nay, though he be otherwise a man without exception, either as to his life and conversation, or as to his gifts and sufficiency for the ministry, you make this his commission an objection against him; for that reason alone you will not accept him. But if another come "in his own name," that is, with no commission but what he has from himself, his own opinion of his own worthiness, "giving out that himself is some great one," (Acts viii. 9.) him ye will receive, and follow and admire him; "heaping to yourselves teachers, having itching ears," as it was prophesied of these most degenerate times, 2 Tim. iv. 3.

But as to those well-disposed Quakers, for whose information chiefly I have written this discourse, I must suppose that their enquiry is wholly concerning the several titles of Bishops, Presbyterians, Independents, &c. to the true succession from the Apostles; that it may thereby be known to which of all these they ought to go for baptism.

This I have shewn in behalf of episcopacy, and put the Presbyterians to prove their succession in the form of Presbytery, which they can never do; because, as I have said before, the chronology of the church does not compute from the succession of

the Presbyters, but only of the Bishops, as being the chief governors of the Church. And therefore, though in many Bishoprics the roll of their Bishops is preserved from the Apostles to this day, yet there is not one bare Presbyter, that is, the minister of a parish and no more, no not in all the world, who can give a roll of his predecessors in that parish, half way to the Apostles, or near it: for from the first plantation of Christianity the church was divided into Bishoprics. This was necessary for the government of the church; but it was not so early sub-divided into parishes. The Presbyters at first attending upon the Bishop, were sent out by him to such places, and for such time as he thought fit; and returning, gave account of their stewardships, or were visited, and changed by him as he saw cause: and therefore, though one might come after another in the place where he had ministered before, yet they could not properly be said to succeed one another, as (to speak intelligibly to the Quakers) many of them do preach after G. Fox, yet none of them are said to succeed him.

I have been thus long upon the Presbyterians, because they only, of all our Dissenters, have any pretence to succession. And what I have said as to them, must operate more strongly against the later Independent, Baptist, &c. who have not the face to pretend to succession, but set up merely upon their own pretended gifts.

But what are these gifts which they so highly boast?

First, an inward and more than ordinary participation of the graces of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, a fluency and powerfulness in preaching and praying.

I know of no other gifts that any of our Dissenters pretend to, unless they will set up for miracles, as G. Fox, &c. And other Dissenters did likewise pretend to the same, at their first setting out, to amuse the people; but (as the Quakers) have let it drop afterwards, to stop any farther examination of it, having already served their turn by it.

But, as to these pretended gifts, if we may trust to our Saviour's rule, of knowing the tree by its fruits, we cannot think it the Holy Spirit of which these men did partake, who filled these three nations with blood and slaughter, and whose religion was never otherwise introduced than by rebellion, in any country whithersoever it has yet come.

And as to that volubility of tongue, which they boast as the main proof of their mission, we have found it by experience, that a little confidence and custom will improve very slender judgment to great readiness in that sort of talent.

And the powerfulness which is found in it by some who are affected with a dismal tone, wry faces, and antic gestures, is not more but less, if there be either method or sense in the discourse; which shews their passion to proceed not from reason, but imagination.

The Scots Presbyterian eloquence affords us monstrous proofs of this, but not so many as you may have from eye and ear-witnesses.

Such coarse, rude, and nasty treatment of God, as they call devotion; as in itself it is the highest affront to the Divine Majesty, so has it contributed in a very great measure to that wild Atheism which has always attended these sort of inspirations; it seeming to many more reasonable to worship no God at all, than to set up one on purpose to ridicule him.

But this sort of enthusiasm presumes upon a familiarity with God, which breeds contempt, and despises the sobriety of religion as a low dispensation. I recommend to the reader that excellent sermon, upon this subject, of Dr. Hicks, called, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm exorcised*: and I desire those to consider who are most taken with these seeming extraordinary gifts of volubility and nimbleness in prayer, that the most wicked men are capable of this perfection; none more than Oliver Cromwell, especially when he was about some nefarious wickedness: he continued most fluently in this exercise all the time that his cut-throats were murdering his Royal Master; and his gift of prayer was greatly admired. Major Weir of Edinburgh was another great instance, who was strangely adored for his gifts, especially prayer, by the Presbyterians in Scotland, while at the same time he was wallowing in the most unnatural and monstrous sins. See his stupendous story in Ravillac Redivivus.

There are many examples of this nature, which shew that this gift is attainable by art. Dr. Wilkins (the father of the Latitudinarians) has given us the receipt in his *Gift of Prayer*.

Yet none of the performances of these gifted men are any ways comparable (as to the wonderful readiness in which they boast) to the extempore verses of Westminster School, which Isaac Vossius could not believe to be extempore till he gave the boys a theme,

which was *Senes his pueri*, and he had no sooner spoke the words, but he was immediately pelted with ingenious epigrams from four or five boys.

So that this volubility in prayer, which is the gift our Dissenters do most glory in, may be deduced from an original far short of divine inspiration.

But suppose that they had really those wonderful gifts which they pretend to, yet were this no ground at all to countenance or warrant their making a schism on that account.

This case has been ruled in a famous and most remarkable instance of it, which God was pleased to permit (for the future instruction of his church) at the first setting out of the Gospel in the very days of the Apostles.

Then it was that Christ, having "ascended upon high," gave many and miraculous gifts unto men, which was necessary towards the first propagation of his gospel, in opposition to all the established religions and governments then in the world, and under their persecution.

But these gifts of miracles did not always secure the possessors from vanity, and an high opinion of themselves, to the disparagement of others, and even to break the order and peace of the church, by advancing themselves above their superiors, or thinking none superior to themselves.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles was not freed from the temptation of this, whom the "messenger of Satan was sent to buffet, lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations which were given to him," 2 Cor. xii. 7. Nay more, our blessed Saviour tells of those who had miraculous gifts bestowed upon them, and yet should be finally rejected, Matt. vii. 22, 23. Therefore he instructs his disciples not to rejoice in those miraculous gifts which he bestowed upon them, but rather "that their names were written in heaven," Luke x. 20. which supposes, that they might have such gifts, and yet their names be written in heaven.

And when he taught them how to pray, he added no petition for such gifts, but only for the remission of their sins, and the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit, which are, as most profitable to us, so most precious in the sight of God.

Now some who had these miraculous gifts made ill use of them, and occasioned a great schism (the first in the Christian Church) at Corinth; they were exalted above measure in their own gifts,

and therefore refused to submit themselves to those who were their superiors in the church (who perhaps had not such gifts as they had) but set up for themselves, and drew parties after them, who were charmed with their extraordinary gifts, thinking that the participation of the saving graces of the Holy Spirit must there chiefly be communicated, where God had bestowed such wonderful gifts; and they laid more stress upon the personal qualifications of these ministers of God, than upon the observance of that order and constitution which he had commanded; which was in effect preferring men to God, and trusting to the instruments rather than to the Author of their religion; as if through the power and holiness of the administrators of God's institutions, and not from him alone, the graces which were promised to the due observance of them were conveyed. Acts iii. 12.

And this, as it turned men from God to trust in man, so, as a necessary consequence of it, it begot great emulations among the people for one teacher against another, even (sometimes) when it was not the fault of the teachers; for people being once let loose from government and order to follow the imaginations of their own brain, will run farther than their first seducers did intend, and will care for themselves.

Thus, in the schism of the church of Corinth, one was for Paul, another for Apollos, another for Cephas, &c. much against the minds of these good Apostles; but having been once unsettled by the pride and ambition of seducers, they "heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears," and made divisions among themselves pretendingly in behalf of Christ and his Apostles, but in effect tending to divide Christ and his Apostles, as also schisms do.

Against these St. Paul disputes with wonderful force of reason and eloquence, particularly in the xiith chapter of his first epistle to these same Corinthians, wherein, from the parallel of the unity of members in the same body, he admirably illustrates, that the many different and miraculous gifts which were then dispensed all from the same Spirit, could be no more an argument for any to advance himself beyond his own station in the church, than for one member of the body, though an eye or an hand, the most useful or beautiful, to glory itself against the inferior members, (who are all actuated by the same soul) or not to be content with its office and station in the body, and due subordination to the head. Thence the Apostle goes on, and makes the application

in the xiiith chapter, that the most exalted, spiritual, or even miraculous gifts, could not only not excuse any schism to be made in the body, that is, the church; but that if any who had such gifts did not employ them for the preservation of the unity of the church, which is very properly expressed by charity, i. e. love for the whole body, such gifts would profit him nothing, lose all their virtue and efficacy as to the possessor, and be rather an aggravation against him, than any excuse for him, to withdraw his obedience from his lawful superiors, and usurp the office of the head, and so make a schism in the body upon the account of his gifts; which though they were so great as to speak with the tongues of men and angels, to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, to have all faith, even to remove mountains, and such a zeal as to give all his goods to the poor, and his very body to be burned; yet, if it be done in schism, out of that love and charity which is due to the body, and to its unity, all is nothing, will profit him nothing at all.

And no wonder; when all that heavenly glory in which Lucifer was created could avail him nothing, when he kept not his first principality, but aspired higher, and made a schism in the hierarchy of heaven, Jude 6.

How then shall they who have (as St. Jude expresses it) “left their own habitation,” or station in the church, and advanced themselves above their Bishops, their lawful superiors, the heads and principles of unity, next and immediately under Christ in their respective churches, upon pretence of their own personal gifts and qualifications, and thereby make a schism in the terrestrial hierarchy of the church, which is the body of Christ, the “fulness of him who filleth all in all,” Eph. i. 23. how shall they be excused for this, whose pretended gifts are in nothing extraordinary, except in a furious zeal without knowledge, and a volubility of tongue, which proceeds from a habit of speaking without thinking, and an assurance that is never out of countenance for ten thousand blunders, which would dash and confound any man of sense or modesty, or that considered the presence of God in which he spoke?

If those truly miraculous gifts, which were made a pretence for the schism at Corinth, were not sufficient to justify that schism; how ridiculous and much more wicked is the pretence of our modern gifted men, who have pleaded their delicate gifts as a suffi-

cient ground for all that schism and rebellion which they have raised up amongst us?

If the real gifts and inspirations of the Holy Spirit were stinted and limited by the governors of the church to avoid schism and confusion in the church, 1 Cor. xiv. from v. 26. If the profits were confined as to their number to two, or at the most three at a time, some ordered to hold their peace, to give place to others; others to keep silence for want of an interpreter; and the women, (though gifted and inspired, as many of them were) totally silenced in the church or public assemblies, 1 Tim. xi. 12. what Spirit has possessed our modern pretenders to gifts, that will not be subject to the prophets, nor to the church, nor to any institutions whether divine or human? But if their superiors pretend to direct them in any thing, they cry out, What! will you stint the Spirit! and think this a sufficient cause to break quite loose from their authority, and set up an open schism against them upon pretence of their wonderful gifts forsooth!

That first schism in the church of these Corinthians was vigorously opposed by the Apostles and Bishops of the church at that time: they like good watchmen would not give way to it, knowing the fatal consequences of it.

This produced two epistles from St. Paul to the Corinthians, and two to them from St. Clement then Bishop of Rome, which are preserved and handed down to us. It was this same occasion of schism which so early began to corrupt the church, that led the holy Ignatius (who flourished in that same age) to press so earnestly in all his epistles to the several churches to whom he wrote, the indispensable obligation of a strict obedience to their respective Bishops; that the laity should submit themselves to the Presbyters and Deacons, as to the apostolical college under Christ; and that the Presbyters and Deacons, as well as the laity, should obey their Bishop as Christ himself, whose person he did represent: that therefore whoever kept not outward communion with his Bishop did forfeit his inward communion with Christ; that no sacraments were valid or acceptable to God which were not celebrated in communion with the Bishop; that nothing in the church should be done, nor any marriage contracted without the Bishop's consent, &c. as you will see hereafter.

These clear testimonies forced the Presbyterians (because they were not in a temper to be convinced) to deny these epistles of Saint Ignatius to be genuine; but they have been so fully vindicated

cated, particularly by the most learned Bishop of Chester, Dr. Pearson, as to silence that cavil, and leave no pretence remaining against episcopacy in that primitive and apostolical age.

Objection from the times of Popery in this kingdom, as if that did unchurch, and consequently break the succession of our Bishops.

I must now account for an objection, which with some seems a mighty one, even enough to overthrow all that I have said concerning the succession of our Bishops, and that is the long midnight of popery which has in old time darkened these nations.

Well; the succession of which I have been speaking was no part of that darkness, and we have, by God's blessing, recovered ourselves in a great measure from that darkness: but that darkness was such as, with some, to destroy the episcopal succession; because, as they say, such great errors, especially that of idolatry, does quite unchurch a people, and consequently must break their succession.

1. This, by the way, is a popish argument, though they that now make it are not aware of it: for the church of Rome argues thus, that idolatry does unchurch, and therefore if she was idolatrous for so long a time as we charge upon her, it will follow that, for so many ages, there was no visible church, at least in these western parts of the world: and Arianism (which is idolatry) having broke in several times upon the church, if idolatry did quite unchurch and break the succession, there would not be a Christian church hardly left in the world: the consequence of which would be as fatal to the church of Rome as to us; therefore let her look to that position, which she has advanced against us, that idolatry does unchurch.

2. But that it does not unchurch, I have this to offer against those Papists, Quakers, and others who make the objection.

1. If it does quite unchurch, then could no Christian be an idolater, because by that he would, *ipso facto*, cease to be a member of the Christian Church: but the Scripture does suppose that a Christian may be an idolater, therefore idolatry does not unchurch. The minor is proved, 1 Cor. v. 11. "If any man that is called a brother (that is, a Christian) be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater." Nay, Eph. v. 5, a covetous man is called "an idolater;" and Col. iii. 5. "Covetousness is idolatry:" so that, by this argument, covetousness does unchurch. If it be said that covetousness is called idolatry only by allusion, but that it is

not formal idolatry, I know no ground for that distinction; the scripture calls it idolatry, and makes no distinction.

But in the first text quoted, 1 Cor. v. 11. both covetousness and idolatry are named; so that you have both material and formal, or what other sort of idolatry you please to fancy.

I grant that in one sense idolatry does unchurch, that is, while we continue in it, it renders us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and forfeits our title to the promises which are made to the church in the Gospel: but so does fornication, covetousness, and every other sin, till we repent and return from it. But none of these sins do so unchurch us as to exclude our returning to the fold by sincere repentance, or to need a second baptism or admission into the church; neither does idolatry. Do I then put idolatry upon the level with other common sins? No, far from it. Every scab is not a leprosy, yet a leper is a man, and may recover his health. Idolatry is a fearful leprosy, but it does not therefore quite unchurch, nor throw us out of the covenant; for, if it did, then would not repentance heal it, because repentance is a great part of the covenant; and therefore, since none can deny repentance to an idolater, it follows that he is not yet quite out of the covenant. Some of the ancients have denied repentance to apostacy, yet granted it to idolatry; which shews that they did not look upon idolatry to be an absolute apostacy; for every sin is an apostacy in a limited sense.

2. Let us in this disquisition follow the example before-mentioned of the Apostles and most primitive fathers, to measure the Christian church with its exact type, the church under the law; which are not two churches, but two states of the same church; for it is the same Christian church from the first promise of Christ, Gen. iii. 15, to the end of the world: and therefore it is said, Heb. iv. 2, that the Gospel was preached unto them, as well as unto us. And these two states of the church before and after Christ do answer like a pair of indentures to one another, the one being to an iota fulfilled in the other, Matt. v. 18.

Now we find frequent lapses to idolatry in the church of the Jews; yet did not this unchurch them, no, nor deprive them of a competent measure of God's holy spirit, as it is written, Neh. ix. 18, 20. "Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God—yet thou, in thy manifold mercies, forsookest them not—Thou gavest thy good spirit to instruct them, &c."

And let it be here observed, that though God sent many prophets to reprove the great wickedness and idolatry, as well of their priests as people, yet none of these holy prophets did separate communion from the wicked priests; they would not join in their idolatrous worship, but in all other parts they joined with them, and set up no opposite priesthood to them. So little did the prophets think that their idolatry had either unchurched them, or broke the succession of the priests; or that it was lawful for any, how holy soever, to usurp upon their priesthood, and supply the deficiencies of it to the people. And apply to this, what I have before shewn in the words of St. Clement, whose name is written in the book of life, that the evangelical priesthood is as surely fixed in the Bishops of the church, and its succession continued in those ordained by them, as the Levitical priesthood was confirmed by the budding of Aaron's rod, and to be continued in that tribe.

3. And here let our Korahites, of several sizes, take a view of the heinousness of their schism; and let them not think their crime to be nothing, because they have been taught with their nurses milk to have the utmost abhorrence to the very name of a Bishop, though they could not tell why: let them rather consider seriously the misfortune of their education, which should make them strangers to all the rest of the Christian world but themselves in a corner, and to all the former ages of Christianity.

They have been told that episcopacy is popery, because the Papists have Bishops.

So have they Presbyters too, that is, Parish priests: they have the Creed likewise, and the Holy Scriptures; and all these must be Popish, if this be a good argument.

But are they willing to be undeceived? Then they must know that episcopacy has none so great an enemy as the papacy, which would engross the whole episcopal power into the single see of Rome, by making all other Bishops absolutely depending upon that, which only they call the Apostolical chair. And no longer since than the council of Trent, the Pope endeavoured, with all his interest, to have episcopacy, except only that of the Bishops of Rome, to be declared not to be *Jure Divino*; by which no other Bishops could claim any other power but what they had from him. But that council was not quite so degenerated as to suffer this to pass,

And the Jesuits and others who disputed there on the Pope's part, used those same arguments against the divine right of episcopacy, which from them and the Popish canonists and schoolmen, have been licked up by the Presbyterians; and others of our dissenters: they are the same arguments which are used by Pope and Presbyter against episcopacy.

When the Pope could not carry his cause against episcopacy in the council of Trent, he took another method; and that was, to set up a vast number of Presbyterian priests, that is, the regulars, whom he exempted from the jurisdiction of their respective Bishops, and framed them into a method and discipline of their own, accountable only to superiors of his, and their own contriving, which is exactly the Presbyterian model.

These usurpations upon the episcopal authority, made the famous Archbishop of Spalato quit his great preferments in the church of Rome, and travel into England in the reign of King James I. to seek for a more primitive and independent episcopacy. Himself, in his *Concilium Profectionis*, gives these same reasons for it; and that this shameful depression and prostitution of episcopacy in the church of Rome was the cause of his leaving her.

He observed truly, that the farther we search upward in antiquity, there is still more to be found of the episcopal, and less of the papal eminence.

St. Ignatius is full in every line almost of the high authority of the Bishop, next and immediately under Christ, as all the other writers in those primitive times; but there is a profound silence in them all of that supremacy in the Bishop of Rome, which is now claimed over all the other Bishops of the Catholic church; which could not be, if it had been then known in the world. This had been a short and effectual method, whereby St. Paul and St. Clement might have quieted the great schism of the Corinthians, against which they both wrote in their epistles to them, to bid them refer their differences to the infallible judge of controversy, the supreme pastor at Rome. But not a word like this; especially considering that St. Peter was one for whom some of these Corinthians strove (1 Cor. i. 12) against those who preferred others before him.

The usurped supremacy of the later Bishops of Rome over their fellow Bishops, has been as fatal to episcopacy, as the rebellion of our yet later Presbyters against their respective Bishops.

And indeed, whoever would write the true history of Presbyterianism, must begin at Rome, and not at Geneva.

So very groundless as well as malicious, is that popular clamour of episcopacy having any relation to popery. They are so utterly irreconcilable, that it is impossible they can stand together; for that moment that episcopacy was restored to its primitive independency, the papacy, that is, that supremacy which does now distinguish it, must *ipso facto* cease. But enough of this, for I must not digress into various subjects.

I have shewn, in answer to the objection of the ages of popery in this kingdom, that all those errors, even idolatry itself, does not unchurch, nor break succession. And secondly, I have exemplified this from the parallel of the Jewish church under the law. Then applying this to our case, I have vindicated episcopacy from the imputation of popery. I will now go on to farther reasons, why the succession of our present Bishops is not hurt by that deluge of popery, which once covered the face of this land.

4. The end of government, as well in the church as state, is to preserve peace, unity and order; and this cannot be done, if the mal-administration of the officers in the government did vacate their commission, without its being recalled by those who gave such commission to them. For then, first, every man must be judge when such a commission is vacated; and then no man is bound to obey longer than he pleases. Secondly, one may say it is vacated, another not, whence perpetual contention must arise.

A man may forfeit his commission, that is, do those things which give just cause to his superiors to take it from him; but it is not actually vacated till it be actually recalled by those who have lawful power to take it from him: otherwise there could be no peace nor certainty in the world, either in public or in private affairs; no family could subsist; no man enjoy an estate; no society whatever could keep together. And the church being an outward society (as shewn in the *Discourse of Water Baptism*, sect. iii.) must consequently subsist by those laws which are indispensable to every society. And though idolatry does justly forfeit the commission of any church in this sense, that God's promises to her being conditional, he may justly take her commission from her, and remove her candlestick: I say, though her commission be thus forfeitable, yet it still continues, and is not actually va-

cated, till God shall please actually to recal it, or take it away: for no commission is void till it be so declared. Thus, though the Jews did often fall into idolatry, yet (as before has been said) God did bear long with them, and did not unchurch them, though they had justly forfeited. And these wicked husbandmen, who slew those whom the Lord sent for the fruits of his vineyard, yet continued still to be the husbandmen of the vineyard, till their Lord did dispossess them, and gave their vineyard unto others.

And natural reason does enforce this: if a steward abuse his trust, and oppresses the tenants, yet are they still obliged to pay their rent to him, and his discharges are sufficient to them against their landlord, till he shall supersede such a steward.

If a captain wrong and cheat his soldiers, yet are they obliged to remain under his command, till the King, who gave him his commission, or those to whom he has committed such an authority, shall cashier him.

And thus it is in the sacerdotal commission. Abuses in it do not take it away, till God, or those to whom he has committed such an authority, shall suspend, deprive, or degrade (as the fact requires) such a Bishop or a Priest.

And there is this higher consideration in the sacerdotal commission, than in those of civil societies, viz. that it is immediately from God; as none therefore can take this honour to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron, so can none take it away, but he that is as expressly and outwardly called thereunto, as Aaron was to be a priest. For this would be to usurp upon God's immediate prerogative, which is to constitute his own priests. Upon this foundation I argue:

5. As the necessity of government, and the general commands in scripture of obedience to government, do require our submission to the government in being, where there is no competition concerning the titles, or any that claims a better right than the possessor: so where a church once established by God, though suffering many interruptions, does continue, her governors ought to be acknowledged, where there is no better claim set up against them.

This was the reason why our Saviour and his Apostles did, without scruple, acknowledge the High-Priest and Sanhedrin of the Jews in their time, though from the days of the Maccabees there had been great interruptions and breaches in the due succession of their priests; and before Christ came, and all his time,

the Romans, as conquerors, disposed of the priesthood as they pleased, and made it annual and arbitrary, which God had appointed hereditary and unmoveable.

But there was then no competition: the Jews did submit to it, because they were under the subjection of the Romans, and could have no other. No High-Priest claimed against him in possession, but all submitted to him.

And our Saviour did confirm his authority, and of the Sanhedrin, or inferior Priests with him, (Matth. xxiii. 2.) saying, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." And St. Paul owned the authority of the High-Priest, Acts xxiii. 5.

Many objections might have been raised against the deduction of their succession from Moses: but there being none who claimed any better right than they had, therefore their right was uncontroverted, and by our Saviour's authority was confirmed.

Now suppose some interruptions had been in the succession, or corruptions in the doctrine and worship of our English Bishops in former ages, yet (as in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees) that could have no effect to invalidate their commission and authority at the present.

The assurance and consent in the episcopal communion beyond that of any other.

1. The whole christian world, as it always has been, so at this present is episcopal, except a few dissenters, who in less than two hundred years last past have arisen like a wart upon the face of the western church: for little more proportion to our Dissenters here, the Hugonots in France, the Presbyterians in Holland, Geneva, and thereabouts, bear to the whole body of the Latin church, which is all episcopal. But if you compare them with the Catholic church all over the world, which is all episcopal, they will not appear so big as a mole.

2. If our Dissenters think it much that the church of Rome should be reckoned in the list against them, we will be content to leave them out: nay more; if we should give them all those churches which own the supremacy of Rome to be joined with them, (as they are the nearest to them) it will be so far from casting the balance on their side, that the other episcopal churches will by far out-number them both.

Let us then, to these Dissenters against episcopacy, add the churches of Italy and Spain entire, with the popish part of Germany, France, Poland, and Hungary (I think they have no more to reckon upon:) against these we produce the vast empire of Russia (which is greater in extent than all these popish countries before named) England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and all the Lutheran churches in Germany, which will out-number both the Papists and Presbyterians before-mentioned. And this comparison is only made to the Latin church: but then we have all the rest of the christian world wholly on the episcopal side, against both the supremacy of Rome and parity of the Presbyterians: the whole Greek church, the Arminians, Georgians, Mingrelians, Jacobites, the Christians of St. Thomas and St. John in the East-Indies, and other oriental churches. Then in Africa, the Copties in Egypt, and great empire of the Abyssinians in Æthiopia. These all are episcopal, and never owned the supremacy of Rome: and over-reckon, out of sight, all that disown the episcopacy, and all that own the supremacy of Rome with them.

3. Let me add, that among our Dissenters every class of them does condemn all the rest; the Presbyterian damns the Quaker; the Quaker damns him; Independent, Baptist, &c. all damn one another, and each denies the others ordination or call.

So that the ordination of every one of them is disowned by all the rest, and all of them together by the whole christian world. And if their ordinations are not valid, then they have no more authority to administer the sacrament than any other laymen; and consequently there can be no security in receiving baptism from any of them.

4. What allowances God will make to those who think their ordination to be good enough, and that they are true ministers of the Gospel, and, as such, do receive the sacraments from them, I will not determine.

But they have no reason to expect the like allowances who are warned of it beforehand, and will notwithstanding venture upon it, before these Dissenters have fully and clearly acquitted themselves of so great and universal a charge laid against them; such an one as must make the whole christian world wrong, if they be in the right: not only the present christian churches, but all the ages of christianity since Christ: of which the Dissenters are desired to produce any one, in any part of the world, that were not episcopal—any one constituted church upon the face of the earth,

that was not governed by Bishops distinct from, and superior to Presbyters, before the Vaudois in Piedmont, the Hugonots in France, the Calvinists in Geneva, and the Presbyterians thence transplanted in this last age into Holland, Scotland, and England.

5. If it should be retorted, that neither is the church of England without opposers; for that the church of Rome opposes her, as do likewise our Dissenters.

Ans. None of them do oppose her in the point we are now upon, that is, the validity of episcopal ordination, which the church of Rome does own; and the Presbyterians dare not deny it, because they would (thereby) overthrow all their own ordinations; for the Presbyters who reformed (as they call it) from Bishops, received their ordinations from Bishops.

And therefore, though the episcopal principles do invalidate the ordination by Presbyters, yet the Presbyterian principles do not invalidate the ordination by Bishops; so that the validity of episcopal ordination stands safe on all sides, even by the confession of those who are enemies to the episcopal order; and in this the Bishops have no opposers.

Whereas, on the other hand, the validity of the Presbyterian ordinations is owned by none but themselves, and they have all the rest of the world as opposite to them.

Therefore, to state the case the most impartially, to receive baptism from these Dissenters, is at least a hazard of many thousands to one; as many as all the rest of Christianity are more than they: but to receive it from the Bishops, or episcopal Clergy, has no hazard at all as to its validity, even as owned by the Presbyterians themselves.

The personal sanctity of the administrator of the sacraments, though highly requisite on his part, yet not of necessity as to the receivers, to convey to them the benefits of the sacraments.

1. The only objection of those Quakers, who are otherwise convinced of the obligation of the sacraments, is the necessity they think there is of great personal holiness in the administrators; without which they cannot see how the spiritual effects of the sacraments can be conveyed. But I would beseech them to consider, how by this, instead of referring the glory to God, and lessening the performance of man, which I charitably presume (and I am confident as to some of whom I speak) that it is their

true and sincere intention ; but instead of that, I do in great goodwill invite them to reflect whether their well-intentioned zeal has not turned the point of this question—even to over-magnify man, and transfer the glory of God unto his weak instrument, as if any (the least part) of the divine virtue which God has annexed to his sacraments did proceed from his minister. If this be not the meaning, (as sure it is not) why so much stress laid upon the sanctity of the ministers ? as if through “their power or holiness” the Holy Ghost was given, Acts iii. 12.

2. To obviate this pretence, our Saviour Christ “chose a devil” (John vi. 70.) to be one of his Apostles ; and he was sent to baptize and work miracles as well as the rest : and those whom Judas did baptize were no doubt as well baptized, and did partake of the communication of the Spirit (according to their preparation for it) as much as any who were baptized by the other Apostles ; unless you will say that Christ sent him to baptize who had no authority to baptize, and that none should receive benefit by his baptism ; which would be to cheat and delude the people ; and is a great blasphemy against Christ ; and a distrust of his power ; as if it were limited by the poor instrument he pleases to make use of ; whereas,

3. His greatness is often most magnified in the meanness of the instruments by which he works. Thus he destroyed Egypt by frogs and lice, and the Philistines by emerods and mice, and sent his armies of flies and hornets to dispossess the Canaanites. Psal. viii. 2. “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies ; that thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger ;” i. e. that the enemies of God might be confounded, when they saw his great power exerted by such weak and contemptible instruments. The walls of Jericho (the type of spiritual wickedness) were thrown down by the blast of seven rams horns, when blown by the priests whom he had commanded : and he rebuked the iniquity of Balaam by the mouth of an ass, to shew that no instruments are ineffectual in his hands ; and made use of the mouth of Balaam to prophesy of Christ. For this cause, says S. Barnabas, in his Catholic epistle, c. 5. did Christ choose men who were “exceeding great sinners” to be his Apostles, to shew the greatness of his power and grace, and put the inestimable treasure of his gospel into earthen vessels, that the praise might be to God, and not to men.

4. St. Paul rejoiced in Christ being preached, Phil. i. 16. though not sincerely by those who did it, because God can bring good out of evil, and by wicked instruments propagate his Gospel, turning their malice (even of the devil himself) to the furtherance of the faith: otherwise the Apostle could have no cause to rejoice in the preaching of wicked men, if none could receive benefit by it. And he plainly supposes, 1 Cor. ix. 27. that a man may save others by his preaching, and yet himself be a cast-away.

5. And so far as we can know or judge any thing, we see daily experience of this, that God has touched mens hearts upon hearing the truth spoken, though by men who were great hypocrites, and very wicked. And what reason can be given to the contrary? Truth is truth, whoever speaks it; and if my heart be prepared, the good seed receives no evil tincture of the hand that sowed it; and who can limit God, that his grace may not go along with me in this?

I have heard some of the now separate Quakers confess, that they have formerly felt very sensible operations of the Spirit upon the preaching of some of those whom they have since detected of gross errors and hypocrisies, and they now think it strange: but this were enough to convince them that "the wind bloweth where it listeth;" otherwise they must condemn themselves, and confess, that in all that time they had no true participation of the Spirit of God, but that what they mistook for it was a mere delusion; or else confess that by the truths which were spoken by these Ministers of Satan (for they speak some truths) God might work a good effect upon the hearts of some well-disposed, though then ignorant, and much deluded people. If not so, we must judge very severely of all those who live in idolatrous and schismatical countries; there were great prophets and good men among the Ten Tribes; and if the words, nay miracles, of Christ, did render the hearts of many yet more obdurate, even to sin against the Holy Ghost, Matt. xii. from v. 22, to v. 32, which was the reason why he sometimes refused to work miracles among them, because thereby they grew worse and worse; and if the preaching of the Gospel by the mouths of the Apostles became the favour of death to wicked and unprepared hearts, why may not the words of truth have a good effect upon honest and good minds, though spoken from the mouth of an hypocrite, or of persons who in other things are greatly deluded?

I have before mentioned the wizard Major Weir, who bewitched the Presbyterians in Scotland since the restoration 1660, as much as Simon Magus did the Samaritans; and yet I suppose the more moderate of the Quakers will not rashly give all over to destruction who blindly followed him, and admired his gifts; or will say but that some words of truth he might drop, might have a real good effect upon some well-meaning, though grossly deluded people who followed him. Two of Winder's witches (see the Snake in the Grass, p. 139) were preachers among the Quakers for twenty years together, and thought to be as powerful and affecting as any others.

6. But the argument will hold stronger against them as to the sacraments, than in the office of preaching; because in preaching much depends upon the qualifications of the person, as to invention, memory, judgment, &c. But in the administration of an outward sacrament nothing is required as of necessity, but the lawfulness of the commission by which such a person does administer; and a small measure of natural or acquired parts is sufficient to the administration.

Therefore let us lay no stress upon the instrument, (more than was upon the waters of Jordan to heal Naaman) but trust wholly upon the commission which conveys the virtue from God, and not from his ministers; that all the glory may be to God, and not to man.

'Tis true, the personal qualifications of the instrument are lovely and desirable, but they become a snare where we expect any part of the success from them. This was the ground of the Corinthian schism, (1 Cor. i. 11.) and, though unseen, of ours at this day.

7. And the consequences of it are of manifold and fatal destruction.

(1.) This unsettles all the assurance we can have in God's promise to assist his own institution; for if the virtue, or any part of it, lies in the holiness of the instrument, we can never be sure of the effect, as to us; because we have no certain knowledge of the holiness of another: hypocrites deceive even good men.

(2.) This would quite disappoint the promise Christ had made, Matt. xxviii. 20. to be with his ministers in the execution of his commission; to baptize, &c. always even unto the end of the world. For if the holiness of the instrument be a necessary qualification, this may fail, nay always must fail, so far as we can be

sure of it; and consequently Christ has commanded baptism and his supper to continue to the end of the world, till his coming again, and yet has not afforded means whereby they may be continued; which he has not done, if the holiness of the administrator be a necessary qualification; and that he has not left us a certain rule whereby to judge of the holiness of another; and thus have you rendered the command of Christ of none effect through your tradition.

(3.) This is contrary to all God's former institutions: the wickedness of the Priests under the law did not excuse any of the people from bringing of their sacrifices to the Priests; the Priests were to answer for their own sin, but the people were not answerable for it, or their offerings the less accepted.

But we were in a much worse condition under the gospel administration, if the effect of Christ's institutions did depend either wholly, or in part, upon the personal holiness of his priests. This would put us much more in their power than it is the intention of those who make this objection to allow to them; this magnifies them more than is due to them; therefore I will apply the Apostle's words to this case, 1 Cor. iii. 21. "Let no man glory in men; who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers? So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God who giveth the increase."

(4.) This was, with others, the error of the ancient Donatists, those proud and turbulent schismatics, the great disturbers of the peace of the church, upon an opinion of their own sanctity above that of other men; for which reason they rejected all baptisms, except what was performed by themselves, and re-baptized those who came over to them from the church; for they said that the holiness of the administrator was necessary towards conveying the spiritual graces of baptism: thus they argued, *Qui non habet quod det, quomodo dat?* i. e. "How shall a man give that to another which he has not himself?" But Optatus answers them, that God was the giver, and not man; *Videte Deum esse datorum*. And he argues that it was preferring themselves before God to think that the virtue of baptism did come from them; that they were nothing but ministers or workmen: and that, as when a cloth was dyed, the change of the cloth came from the colours infused, not from the virtue of the dyer; so that in baptism the change of the baptized came from the virtue of the sacraments, not from the administrator; that it was the water of baptism which did wash,

not the person who applied the water; that the personal sanctity of the administrator signified nothing to the efficacy of the sacrament: therefore, says he, *Nos operemur ut ille det, qui se daturum esse promisit*, i. e. "Let us work, that God, who has promised it, may bestow the effect;" and that when we work, *Humana sunt opera, sed Dei sunt munera*, i. e. "The work is man's, but the gift is God's."

And thence he exposes that ridiculous principle of the Donatists, which they advanced to gain glory to themselves, that the gift in baptism was of the administrator, and not of the receiver: but he shews that the gift was conferred by God proportionably to the faith of the receiver, and not according to the holiness of the administrator.

The discourse is large to which I refer the reader: I have given this taste of it to let these see to whom I now write, that they have (though unaware) stumbled upon the very notion of the Donatists, which divided them from the Catholic Church, and which, with them, has been long since exploded by the whole Christian world; and I hope this may bring them to a more sober mind, to consider from whence; and with whom they have fallen; and to return again to the peace of the church, and the participation of the blessed sacraments of Christ, and the inestimable benefits which he has promised to the worthy receivers of them.

Lastly, Let me observe that this error of the Donatists and Quakers borders near upon popery, nay rather seems to exceed it: for the church of modern Rome makes the validity of the sacraments to depend upon the intention of the priest; but his intention is much more in his own power, and there are more evident signs of it than of his holiness.

8. I would not have the Quakers imagine that any thing I have said was meant in excuse for the ill-lives of the clergy of the church of England; as if the Dissenters were unblamable, but our clergy wholly prostitute to all wickedness; and for this cause we plead against the sanctity of the administrator as essential to the sacrament.

No, that is far from the reason; I do not love to make comparisons, or personal reflexions; if all men be not as they should be, pray God make them so. But I think there is no modest Dissenter will be offended if I say, that there are of our Bishops and Clergy, men, not only of learning and moral honesty, but of devotion and spiritual illumination, and as much of the sobriety

of religion, and can give as many signs of it, equally at least, (to speak modestly) as any of our Dissenters of what denomination soever.

9. And I hope what I have said will at least hinder the succession of the Bishops from the Apostles to be any objection against them: and they being possessed moreover of all the other pretences of our Dissenters, the balance must needs lie on their side, and security can only be with them; because there is doubt in all the other schemes of the Dissenters, if what I have said can amount but to a doubt. If the want of succession and outward commission, upon which Christ and his Apostles, and the whole Christian church in all ages till the last century; and in all places, even at this day, except some corners in the west; and the mosaical institution before them, did, by the express command of God, lay so great a stress; if all this make but a doubt (it is strange that it should, at least that it should not) in the mind of any considering persons; then can they not with security communicate with any of our Dissenters, because, if he that eateth and doubteth is damned, Rom. xiv. 13, much more he that shall do so in religious matters, wherein chiefly this rule must stand, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

10. But now to argue a little *ad hominem*: suppose that the succession of our Bishops were lost; and suppose what the Quakers and some others would have, that the thread being broke, we must cast a new knot, and begin again, and make an establishment among ourselves the best we can; well, when this is done, ought not that establishment to be preserved? Ought every one to break in upon it without just cause? Should every one take upon him (or her) to preach or baptize contrary to the rules established? This I think no society of men will allow; for the members of a society must be subject to the rules of the society, otherwise it is no society: and the Quakers of Gracechurch-street communion have contended as zealously for this compliance as any.

Now then, suppose that the conscientious Quakers, to whom I speak, should lay no stress at all upon the succession of our Bishops, and consider our constitution no otherwise than of an establishment by agreement amongst ourselves; yet even so, by their own confession, while they can find no fault with our doctrine or worship, they ought not to make a schism in this constitution which they found established, and they ought to return to it; and if a new knot was cast upon the broken thread of suc-

cession at the reformation from popery, that knot ought not to be unloosed without apparent and absolute necessity, lest if we cast new knots every day, we shall have no thread left unknotted, and expose ourselves to the derision of the common adversary.

11. Consider the grievous sin of schism and division, it is no less than the rending of Christ's body; and therefore great things ought to be borne, rather than run into it; even all things, except only that which is apparently sinful, and that by the express words of scripture, and not from our own imaginations, though never so strong. And though there are some imperfections in our reformation as to discipline, and all the high places are not yet taken away, (the Lord of his mercy quickly remove them) yet I will be bold to say, that in our doctrine, worship, and hierarchy, nothing can be objected that is contrary to the rule of the holy scripture, or any thing enjoined which is there forbid to be done: and nothing less can warrant any schism against our church.

12. Now to come to a conclusion upon the whole matter. If you cannot get baptism as you would have it, take it as you can get it. If you cannot find men of such personal excellencies as the Apostles, take those who have the same commission which they had, derived down to them by regular ordination; who reformed from popery, and have been the established church of this nation ever since; and moreover are as unexceptionable in their lives and conversations as any others. These are all the securities you can have (without new miracles) for receiving the sacraments from proper hands. And therefore there is no doubt but God will accept of your obedience in receiving them from such hands, much rather than your disobedience of his command to be baptized, because you are not pleased with those whom his providence has, at this day, left in the execution of his commission to baptize: as if the weakness of his minister could obstruct the operations of his Spirit, in making good his part of the covenant, which he has promised.

13. There is an objection against baptism which is not worth an answer; but that I would condescend to the meanest, and leave nothing behind which might be a stumbling block to any.

I have heard it urged, that there is no visible effects seen by our baptisms; that men remain wicked and loose notwithstanding; and therefore some do conclude that there is no virtue in baptism.

Ans. To make this argument of any force, it must be proved that none do receive any benefit by it: for if some do receive benefit by it, and others do not, this must be charged upon the disposition of the recipient, according to the known rule, that “ whatsoever is received, is received according to the known disposition of the receiver.” Thus the same meat is turned into good nourishment in an healthy, and into noxious humours in a vitiated stomach. Simon Magus received no benefit by his baptism; and after the sop the devil entered into Judas; yet the other Apostles received great benefit by it. To some it is the savour of life, even the communion of Christ’s body and blood; to others of condemnation, who “ discern not the Lord’s body” in it, but receive it as a common thing, 1 Cor. x. 16.—xi. 29. Therefore we are commanded, v. 28. to examine ourselves, to prepare our hearts for the worthy receiving of it.

But some say, as the Jews to Christ, “ shew us a sign;” they would have some miraculous effects immediately to appear. These are ignorant of the operations of the Spirit; and to these I say in the words of Christ, John iii. 8. “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;” it works silently, but powerfully; and its progress, like the growing of our bodies, is not all at once, but by degrees, whose motion is imperceptible to human eyes.

The true use that is to be made of this objection, that so few (and yet they are not few who) receive the inestimable benefits which are conveyed in the sacraments of Christ’s institution, is this, to take the greater care, and the more earnestly to beg the assistance of God’s grace to fit and prepare us for the worthy receiving of them, but by no means to neglect them; for those who refused to come to the supper were rejected, as well as he who came without a wedding garment.

A SUPPLEMENT.

THE stress of this discourse being founded upon episcopacy, and long quotations being improper in so short a method of argument as I have taken; to supply that defect, and at the same

time to make it easier to the reader, I have added by way of supplement a short index or collection of authorities in the first four hundred and fifty years after Christ for episcopacy, with respect to the Presbyterian pretences, of making a Bishop all one with a Presbyter, at least with one of their Moderators: and, in the next place, I have shewn the sense of the reformation, as to episcopacy. Take them as follows.

Some Authorities for Episcopacy, as distinct from and superior to Presbytery, taken out of the Fathers and Councils in the first four hundred and fifty Years after Christ.

Anno Domini 70. St Clement, Bishop of Rome and Martyr, of whom mention is made, Phil. iv. 3. in his first epistle to the Corinthians, sect. 42. p. 89; of the edition at Oxford, 1677.

“The Apostles having preached the gospel through regions and cities, did constitute the first fruits of them, having proved them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons of those who should believe; and this, not as a new thing, for many ages before it was written concerning Bishops and Deacons; for thus saith the scripture, in a certain place, “I will constitute their Bishops in righteousness, and their Deacons in faith.” Isaiah-lx. 17:

“What wonder is it then those who were instructed by God in Christ with this commission should constitute those before spoke of?”

Ibid. sect. 44. “And the Apostles knew by the Lord Jesus Christ that contests would arise concerning the episcopal name (or order;) and for this cause, having perfect foreknowledge (of these things) they did ordain those whom we have mentioned before; and moreover did establish the constitution, that other approved men should succeed those who died in their office and ministry.”

“Therefore those that were constituted by them, or afterwards by other approved men, with the consent of all the church, and have administered to the flock of Christ unblameably, with humility and quietness, without all stain of filth and naughtiness, and have carried a good report of a long time from all men, I think cannot, without great injustice, be turned out of their office: for it will be no small sin to us if we thrust those from their bishoprics who have holily and without blame offered our gifts (and prayers to God.): Blessed are those Priests who are happily dead, for they are not afraid of being ejected out of the places in which they are constituted; for I understand that you have

deprived some from their ministry, who behaved themselves unreprouvable amongst you.

Sect. 40. "To the High-priest his proper offices were appointed; the Priests had their proper order, and the Levites their peculiar services, or deaconships; and the laymen what was proper for laymen.

This, as before shewn, St. Clement applied to the distribution of orders in the Christian Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. And the office of the Levites is here called by the word *Διάκονος*, i. e. the office of Deacons.

A.D. 71. St. Ignatius, a glorious martyr of Christ, was constituted by the Apostles Bishop of Antioch, and did thereby think that he succeeded them (as all other Bishops do) in their full apostolical office: thence he salutes the church of the Trallians in the fulness of the apostolical character; and in his epistle he says to them,

"Be subject to your Bishops as to the Lord—

"And to the Presbyters, as to the Apostles of Christ—Likewise the Deacons also, being ministers of the mysteries of Christ, ought to please in all things—Without these there is no church of the elect—He is without who does any thing without the Bishop, and Presbyters, and Deacons; and such a one is defiled in his conscience."

In his epistle to the Magnesians he tells them, "That they ought not to despise their Bishop for his youth, but to pay him all manner of reverence, according to the commandment of God the Father; as I know that your holy Presbyters do—

"Therefore as Christ did nothing without the Father, so neither do ye, whether Presbyter, Deacon, or laick, any thing without the Bishop.

"Some indeed call him Bishop, yet do all things without him; but these seem not to me to have a good conscience, but rather to be hypocrites and scorners.

"I exhort you to do all things in the same mind of God, the Bishop presiding in the place of God, and the Presbyters in room of the college of the Apostles; and the Deacons, most beloved to me, who are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ."

He directs his epistle to the church at Philadelphia, "to those who were in unity with their Bishop and Presbyters and Deacons."

And says to them in his epistle, "That as many as are of Christ, these are with the Bishop; and those who shall repent, and return to unity of the Church, being made worthy of Jesus Christ, shall partake of eternal salvation in the kingdom of Christ.

"My brethren, be not deceived; if any shall follow him that makes a schism, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

"I exhort you to partake of the one eucharist; for there is one body of the Lord Jesus, and one blood of his, which was shed for us; and one cup—and one altar; so there is one Bishop with his Presbytery, and the Deacons, my fellow servants.

"Give heed to the Bishop, and to the Presbytery, and to the Deacons—Without the Bishop do nothing."

In his epistle to the Smyrnæans, he says, "Flee divisions as the beginning of evils: all of you follow your Bishops, as Jesus Christ the Father; and the Presbyters as the Apostles; and reverence the Deacons as the institution of God. Let no man do any thing of what appertains to the church without the Bishop: let that sacrament be judged effectual and firm which is dispensed by the Bishop, or him to whom the Bishop has committed it. Wherever the Bishop is, there let the people be; as where Christ is, there the heavenly host is gathered together. It is not lawful without the Bishop either to baptize or celebrate the offices; but what he approves of, according to the good pleasure of God, that is firm and safe, and so we do every thing securely.

"I salute your most worthy Bishop, your venerable Presbytery, and the Deacons my fellow servants."

In his epistle to St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and Martyr, who, together with himself, was disciple to St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, he gives these directions.

"If any can remain in chastity, to the glory of the body of the Lord, let him remain without boasting; if he boasts, he perishes; and if he pretends to know more than the Bishop, he is corrupted. It is the duty both of men and women that marry to be joined together by the approbation of the Bishop, that the marriage may be in the Lord, and not according to our own lusts. Let all things be done to the glory of God.

"Give heed to your Bishop, that God may hearken unto you: my soul for theirs, who subject themselves under the obedience of their Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons; and let me take my lot with them in the Lord."

And he says to Bishop Polycarp, "Let nothing be done without thy sentence and approbation."

A. D. 180. St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, in France, who was disciple of St. Polycarp; he flourished about the year of Christ 180.

Advers. Heres. l. 3. c. 3. "We can reckon those Bishops who have been constituted by the Apostles, and their successors, all the way to our times. And if the Apostles knew hidden mysteries; they would certainly have delivered them chiefly to those to whom they committed the churches themselves, and whom they left their own successors, and in the same place of government as themselves. We have the successions of the Bishops to whom the apostolic church in every place was committed. All these (heretics) are much later than the Bishops, to whom the Apostles did deliver the churches.

L. 4. c. 6. "The true knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient state of the church throughout the whole world, and the character of the body of Christ according to the succession of the Bishops, to whom they committed the church that is in every place, and which has descended even unto us."

Tertullian; A. D. 203. c. 32. of the prescription of heretics, c. 34. "Let them produce the original of their churches; let them shew the order of their Bishops, that by their succession, deduced from the beginning, we may see whether their first Bishop had any of the Apostles or apostolical men, who did likewise persevere with the Apostles, for his founder and predecessor: for thus the apostolical churches do derive their succession; as the church of Smyrna from Polycarp, whom John (the Apostle) placed there; the church of Rome from Clement, who was in like manner ordained by Peter; and so the other churches can produce those constituted in their bishoprics by the Apostles."

C. 36. "Reckon over the apostolical churches, where the very chairs of the Apostles do yet preside in their own places; at Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Thessalonica, &c."

Of baptism, c. 17. "The High-priest, who is the Bishop, has the power of conferring baptism, and under him the Presbyters and Deacons; but not without the authority of the Bishop."

A. D. 220. Origenis Comment. in Matt. Rothomagi, 1688, Gr. Lat. p. 255. names the distinct order of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon. "Such a Bishop, (says he, speaking of one who sought vain glory, &c.) doth not desire a good work—and the same is to be said of Presbyters and Deacons—The Bishops and Presbyters who have the chief place among the people—The Bishop is called prince in the churches. And speaking of the irreligious clergy, he directs it to them, whether Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons."

Saint Cyprian, Archbishop of Carthage, A. D. 240. Edit. Oxon. Epist. xxxiii. Lapsis. "Our Lord, whose commands we ought to reverence and obey, being about to constitute the episcopal honour, and the frame of his church, said to Peter, "Thou art Peter," &c. From thence the order of Bishops and constitution of the church does descend, by the line of succession, through all times and ages, that the church should be build upon the Bishops—It is established by the divine law that every act of the church should be governed by the Bishop."

Ep. xlv. Cornelio. "We ought chiefly (my brother) to endeavour to keep that unity which was enjoined by our Lord and his Apostles to us their successors to be carefully observed by us."

Ep. iii. Rogatiano. "The Deacons ought to remember that it was the Lord who chose the Apostles, that is, the Bishops."

Ep. lxvi. Florentio. Christ said to the Apostles, and by that to all Bishops or governors of his church, who succeed the Apostles, by vicarious ordination, and are in their stead, "He that heareth you, heareth me."

Ibid. "For from hence do schisms and heresies arise, and have arisen, while the Bishop, who is one, and governor of the church, by a proud presumption is despised; and that man who is honoured as worthy by God, is accounted unworthy by man."

Epist. lix. Cornelio. "Nor are heresies sprung up, or schisms arisen from any other fountain than from hence, that obedience is not paid to the priest of God, and that there is not one priest at a time in the church, and one judge for the time in the place of Christ; to whom if the whole fraternity did obey, according to the divine œconomy, none would dare to move any thing against the sacerdotal college. It is necessary that the Bishops should exert their authority with full vigour. But if it is so, that we are afraid of the boldness of the most profligate, and that which these wicked

men cannot compass by the methods of truth and equity, if they can accomplish by their rashness and despair, then is there an end of the episcopal authority, and of their sublime and divine power in governing of the church. Nor can we remain Christians any longer, if it is come to this, that we should be afraid of the threats and snares of the wicked.

“ The adversary of Christ, and enemy of his church, for this end strikes at the Bishop or Ruler of the church with all his malice, that the governor being taken away, he might ravage the more violently and cruelly upon the shipwreck of the church.

“ Is honour then given to God, when the divine majesty and censure is so despised, that these sacrilegious persons say, do not think of the wrath of God, be not afraid of his judgment, do not knock at the door of the church; but without any repentance or confession of their crime, despising the authority of their Bishops, and trampling it under their feet, a false peace is preached to be had from the Presbyters,” viz. in their taking upon them to admit those that were fallen into communion, or the peace of the church, without the allowance of the Bishop.

“ They imitate the coming of Antichrist now approaching.”

Ep. lxxx. Successio. “ Valerian (the Emperor) wrote to the senate, that the Bishops, and the Presbyters, and the Deacons should be prosecuted.”

Firmilianus Cypriano. Ep. lxxv. p. 225. “ The power of remitting sins was given to the Apostles, and to the Bishops, who have succeeded them by a vicarious ordination.”

Ep. xvi. p. 36, Cyprianus Presbyteris et Diaconibus. “ What danger ought we to fear from the displeasure of God, when some Presbyters, neither mindful of the Gospel, nor of their own station in the church, neither regarding the future judgment of God, nor the Bishop who is set over them, which was never done under our predecessors, with the contempt and neglect of their Bishop, do arrogate all unto themselves? I could bear with the contempt of our episcopal authority, but there is now no room left for dissembling, &c.”

A. D. 365. Optatus Milevitanus, Bishop of Mileve, or Mela, in Numidia in Africa.

L. 2. Contra Parmenianum, “ The church has her several members, Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons, and the company of the faithful.

You found in the church Deacons, Presbyters, Bishops; you have made them laymen; acknowledge that you have subverted souls."

A. D. 370. St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, upon Eph. iv. 11, speaking of the several orders of the church; "And he gave some "Apostles, and some Prophets and Evangelists," &c. says, "That by the Apostles there were meant the Bishops; by Prophets, the expounders of the Scriptures; and by the Evangelists, the Deacons. But says that they all met in the Bishop, for that he was the chief Priest; that is (says he) the Prince of the Priests, and both Prophet and Evangelist, to supply all the offices of the church for the ministry of the faithful."

And upon 1 Cor. xii. 28, says, "That Christ constituted the Apostles head in the church; and that these are the Bishops."

And upon verse 29. "Are all Apostles?" i. e. all are not Apostles. "This is true, (says he) because in the church there is but one Bishop.

"And because all things are from one God the Father, therefore hath he appointed that one Bishop should preside over each church."

In his book of the Dignity of the Priesthood, c. 3, he says, "That there is nothing in this world to be found more excellent than the Priests, nothing more sublime than the Bishops."

And, speaking of what was incumbent upon the several orders of the church, he does plainly distinguish them; for, says he, in the same place,

"God does require one thing from a Bishop, another from a Presbyter, another from a Deacon, another from a layman."

St. Jerome, A. D. 380, in his comment upon the Ep. to Titus. "When it began to be said, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, &c. and every one thought that those whom he baptized belonged to himself, and not to Christ, it was decreed through the whole earth, that one chosen from among the Presbyters should be set over the rest, that the seeds of schism might be taken away."

In his epist. to Evagrius. "From Mark the Evangelist to Heraclas and Dionysius the Bishops, the Presbyters of Egypt have always chosen out one from among themselves, whom having placed in an higher degree than the rest, they called their Bishop.

“ He that is advanced, is advanced from less to greater.

“ The greatness of riches, or the humility of poverty, does not make a Bishop greater or less, seeing all of them are the successors of the Apostles.

“ That we may know the apostolical œconomy to be taken from the pattern of the Old Testament, the same that Aaron and his sons, and the Levites were in the temple, the Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons are in the church of Christ.”

And Nepotianum. “ Be subject to your Bishop or chief Priest, and receive him as the father of your soul.”

Advers. Luciferianos. “ The safety of the church depends upon the dignity of the High-Priest, to whom unless a sort of absolute and eminent power be given above all, there will be as many schisms in the church as there are Priests. Thence it is, that without the command of the Bishop, neither a Presbyter, nor a Deacon, have power to baptize—And the Bishop is to impose his hands upon those who are baptized by Presbyters or Deacons, for the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

And comforting Heliodorus, a Bishop, upon the death of Nepotian, his presbyter and his nephew, he commends Nepotian in that he revered his Bishop. “ He honoured Heliodorus in public as his Bishop, at home as his father: but among his Presbyters and co-equals he was the first in his vocation, &c.”

Upon the lxth of Isaiah he calls the future Bishops “ Princes of the church.”

Inscript. Ecclesiast. de Jacobo. “ James, after the passion of our Lord, was immediately by the Apostles ordained Bishop of Jerusalem.” The like he tells of the first Bishops of other places.

Ep. 54. contra Montanum. “ With us the Bishops hold the place of the Apostles.”

A. D. 420. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa, epist. 42. “ The root of the Christian Society is diffused throughout the world, in a sure propagation, by the seats of the Apostles, and the succession of the Bishops.”

Quæst. Veter. et Novi Test. sect. 97. “ There is none but knows that our Saviour did constitute Bishops in the churches; for before he ascended into heaven he laid his hands upon the Apostles, and ordained them Bishops.”

L. 7, c. 43. “ The sentence of our Lord Jesus Christ is clear, who sent his Apostles, and gave to them alone that power which

he had received from his Father ; to whom we have succeeded, governing the church of God by the same power."

Ep. 162, speaking of the Bishops being called angels, Rev. ii. he says, "By the voice of God the governor of the church is praised, under the name of an angel."

De verbis Domini, Serm. 24, "If he said to the Apostles alone, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me," then despise us: but if those words of his come down even unto us, and that he has called us, and constituted us in their place, see that you do not despise us."

Contra Faust. lib. 33, cap. ult. "We embrace the Holy Scripture, which from the times of the presence of Christ himself, by the disposition of the Apostles, and the successions of other Bishops from their seats, even to these times, has come down to us, safely kept, commended, and honoured through the whole earth."

Lib. 2, contra Literas Petiliani, c. 51. "What has the chair of the church of Rome done to thee, in which Peter sat, and in which at this day Anastasius sits; or of the church of Jerusalem, in which James did sit, and in which John does now sit?"

Contra Julianum, l. 2, cap. ult. "Irenæus, Cyprian, Reticus, Olympius, Hilary, Gregory, Basil, John, Ambrose—these were Bishops, grave, learned, &c."

Quest. ex Vet. Test. qu. 35. "The King bears the image of God, as the Bishop of Christ. Therefore while he is in that station he is to be honoured, if not for himself, yet for his order."

Let this suffice as to the testimonies of particular fathers of the church, though many more may be produced in that compass of time to which I have confined our present enquiry. And now (that no conviction might be wanting) I will set down some of the canons of the councils in those times, to the same purpose; whereby it will appear that episcopacy, as distinct from and superior to Presbytery, was not only the judgment of the first glorious saints and martyrs of Christ, but the current doctrine and government of the church, both Greek and Latin, in those early ages of Christianity.

In the canons of the Apostles, the distinction of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon, is so frequent, that it is almost in vain to give

citations. The first and second canons shew the difference to be observed in the ordaining of them.

“ Let a Bishop be consecrated by two or three Bishops.

“ Let a Presbyter and Deacon be ordained by one Bishop.”

See the same distinction of these orders, can. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 36, 42, 44, 45, 51, 52, 53, 63, 68, 69, 70, 83. Can. 15, shews the jurisdiction of the Bishops over the Presbyters and Deacons.

“ If any Presbyter or Deacon, or any of the clerical order, shall leave his own parish, and go to another, without the Bishop’s leave, he shall officiate no longer, especially if he obey not the Bishop, when he exhorts him to return, persisting in his insolence and disorderly behaviour, but he shall be reduced there to communicate only as a layman.”

And can. 31, “ If any Presbyter, despising his own Bishop, shall gather congregations apart, and erect another altar, his Bishop not being convict of wickedness or irreligion, let him be deposed as an ambitious person, for he is a tyrant; as likewise such other clergy, and as many as shall join with him; but the laymen shall be excommunicated: but let this be after the first, second, and third admonition of the Bishop.”

Can. 39. “ Let the Presbyters and Deacons do nothing without the consent of the Bishop; for it is he to whom the people of the Lord are committed, and from whom an account of their souls will be required.”

Can. 41. “ We ordain the Bishop to have power over the goods of the church—And to administer to those who want by the hands of the Presbyters and Deacons.”

Can. 55. “ If any clergyman shall reproach his Bishop, let him be deposed; for “ thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of the people.”

After the canons of the Apostles, I produce next a great council of eighty-seven Bishops, held at Carthage, in the year of Christ 256, under St. Cyprian, Archbishop of that place, which is published in St. Cyprian’s works before quoted, p. 229, where he tells us,

“ That besides the Bishops, there met there both Presbyters and Deacons, and great numbers of the laity.”

The council of Eliberis in Spain about the year of Christ 305, cap. 18 and 19. “ Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons are named

distinct." And in c. 32, "Presbyters and Deacons are forbid to give the communion to those who had grievously offended, without the command of the Bishop."

C. 75. "Of those who shall falsely accuse a Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon."

C. 77. "It is ordained that those who are baptized by a Deacon, without the Bishop or Presbyter, shall afterwards be confirmed by the Bishop."

The council of Arles in France, about the year of Christ 309, c. 13, It is ordained that the Deacons should be subject to the Presbyters. And c. 19.

"That the Presbyters should be subject to their Bishop, and do nothing without his consent."

The council of Ancyra, A. A. 315, c. 2, and 8, having prohibited those Presbyters and Deacons who had, in times of persecution, offered to idols, from the execution of their office, says, "That notwithstanding the Bishop may dispense with them, if he sees their repentance sincere; for that this power is lodged in the Bishop."

The council of Laodicea, A. D. 321, can. 41, "That no clergyman ought to travel without the consent of his Bishop."

Can. 56. "That the Presbyters ought not to go into the church, and sit in their stalls, till the Bishop come, and to go in with the Bishop."

The first and great council of Nice, A. D. 325, can. 16, "That if any Presbyters or Deacons leave their own churches, they ought not to be received into another church: and that if any shall ordain such in his church as belong to another, without the consent of his proper Bishop, let such ordination be void."

The council of Gangra, A. D. 326, can. 6. "If any have private meetings out of the church, without their Presbyter, let them be anathematized by the sentence of the Bishop."

Can. . "If any will take or give of the fruits offered to the church, out of the church, without leave of the Bishop, let him be anathema."

The council of Antioch, A. D. 341, can. 3. "If any Presbyter or Deacon, leaving his own parish, shall go to others, and refuse to return when his own Bishop shall summon him, let him be deposed."

Can. 4. "If any Bishop being deposed by a synod, or a Presbyter or Deacon being deposed by his own proper Bishop, shall

presume to exercise his function, let no room be left them either for restoration or apology."

Can. 5. "If any Presbyter or Deacon, despising his own Bishop, shall separate himself from the church, and gather a congregation of his own, and set up a different altar, and shall refuse to submit himself to his Bishop, calling him the first and second time, let him be absolutely deposed."

Can. 12. "If any Presbyter or Deacon, being deposed by his own proper Bishop, or a Bishop by the synod, dare appeal to the King, seeing his appeal lies to a greater synod of more Bishops, where he is to expect the examination of his cause, and to refer the decision to them: but if, making light of these, he trouble the King with it, such an one is worthy of no pardon, nor ought to be admitted to make any sort of apology, or to have hopes of his being ever restored any more."

Can. 22. "That a Bishop ought not to ordain Presbyters or Deacons in another Bishop's diocese, without his leave."

In the Council of Carthage, A. D. 348, can. 11, the cause is put where a Deacon being accused, "shall be tried by three neighbouring Bishops, a Presbyter by six, and a Bishop by twelve."

The second œcumenical council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, can. 6, ranks those with heretics, "who, though they profess the true faith, yet run into schism, and gather congregations apart from, and in opposition to our canonical Bishops."

The Council of Carthage, A. D. 419, can. 3, mentions the three distinct orders of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon; and compares them to the High-Priests, Priests and Levites.

In the same manner they are as distinctly mentioned, can. 4, Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon; and their powers distinct; For,

Can. 6. It is declared not to be lawful for Presbyters to consecrate churches, or reconcile penitents; but if any be in great danger, and desirous to be reconciled in the absence of the Bishop,

"The Presbyter ought to consult the Bishop, and receive his orders in it;" as is declared in the 7th can.

Can. 10. "If any Presbyter, being puffed up with pride, shall make a schism against his own proper Bishop, let him be anathema."

Can. 11. Gives leave to a Presbyter, who is condemned by his Bishop, to appeal to the neighbouring Bishops; but if, with-

out this, he flies off, and makes a schism from his Bishop, it confirms the anathema upon him.

Can. 12. Orders what is before recited out of can. 11, of the council of Carthage, "That a Bishop who is accused shall be tried by twelve Bishops, if more may not be had; a Presbyter by six Bishops, with his own Bishop; and a Deacon by three."

Can. 14, orders, "That in Tripoli, because of the smaller number of Bishops in those parts, a Presbyter shall be judged by five Bishops, and a Deacon by three, his own proper Bishop presiding."

Can. 46. "That a Presbyter shall not reconcile a penitent without the knowledge of the Bishop, unless upon necessity, in the absence of the Bishop."

Can. 59. "That one Bishop may ordain many Presbyters; but that it was hard to find a Presbyter who was fit to be made a Bishop."

Can. 65. "That a Clergyman, being condemned by the Bishops, cannot be delivered by that church to which he did belong, or by any man whatsoever."

Can. 126. "That Presbyters and Deacons may appeal from their own Bishop to the neighbouring Bishops, chosen by consent of their own Bishop, and from them to the primate or provincial synod; but not to any transmarine or foreign jurisdiction, under pain of excommunication."

The council of Chalcedon, being the fourth general council, A. D. 451, can. 9. "If any Clergyman have a cause of complaint against another Clergyman, let him not leave his own proper Bishop, and have recourse to the secular courts—Whoever does otherwise, shall be put under the canonical censures."

Can. 13. "That a foreign Clergyman, and not known, shall not officiate in another city, without commendatory letters from his own Bishop."

Can. 18. If any of the Clergy shall be found conspiring, or joining in fraternities, or contriving any thing against the Bishops, they shall fall from their own degree.

Can. 29. "To reduce a Bishop to the degree of a Presbyter, is sacrilege."

These authorities are so plain and full, as to prevent any application, or multiplying of farther quotations, which might easily be done: for if these can be answered, so may all that can possibly be produced, or framed in words.

And there is no remedy left to the Presbyterians, and other dissenters from episcopacy, but to deny all these by wholesale, to throw off all antiquity, as well the first ages of Christianity, even that wherein the Apostles themselves lived and taught, as all since; and to stand upon a new foundation of their own invention.

But this only shews the desperateness of their cause, and the impregnable bulwark of episcopacy, which (I must say it) stands upon so many clear and authentic evidences, as can never be overthrown, but by such topicks as must render Christianity itself precarious.

And if from the etymology of the words Bishop and Presbyter, any argument can be drawn (against all the authorities produced) to prove them the same, we may by this way of reasoning, prove Cyrus to be Christ, for so he is called, Isaiah lxxv. 1.

Or if the Presbyterians will have their moderator to be a Bishop, we will not quarrel with them about a word. Let us then have a moderator, such as the Bishops before described, viz, a moderator, as a standing officer, during life, to whom all the Presbyters are to be obedient, as to Christ, i. e. to the moderator, as representing the person of Christ; that nothing be done in the church without him; that he be understood as the principle of unity in his church, so that they who unjustly break off from his communion, are thereby in a schism; that he shew his succession by regular ordination conveyed down from the Apostles: in short, that he have all that character and authority which we see to have been recognized in the Bishops in the very age of the Apostles, and all the succeeding ages of Christianity; and then call him moderator, superintendent, or Bishop; for the contest is not about the name, but the thing.

And if we go only upon the etymology of the word, how shall we prove Presbyters to be an order in the church more than Bishops? As Athanasius said to Dracontius of those who persuaded him not to accept of a bishoprick.

“Why do they persuade you not to be a Bishop, when they themselves will have Presbyters?”

I will end this head with the advice of this great father to this same Dracontius.

Athanas. Epist. ad Dracont. “If the government of the churches do not please you; and that you think the office of a Bishop has no reward, thereby making yourself a despiser of our Saviour, who did institute it; I beseech you surmise not any

such things as these, nor do you entertain any who advise such things; for that is not worthy of Dracontius: for what things the Lord did institute by his Apostles, those things remain both good and sure."

2. Having thus explained those texts of scripture which speak of episcopacy, by the concurrent sense of those who lived with the Apostles, and were taught the faith from their mouths, who lived zealous confessors, and died glorious martyrs of Christ, and who succeeded the Apostles in those very churches where themselves had sat Bishops; and having deduced their testimonies, and of those who succeeded them down for four hundred and fifty years after Christ, (from which time there is no doubt raised against the universal reception of episcopacy) and this not only from their writings apart, but by their canons and laws when assembled together in council; which one would think sufficient evidence against none at all on the other side, that is, for the succession of churches in the Presbyterian form, of which no one instance can be given, so much as of any one church in the world so deduced, not only from the days of the Apostles, (as is shewn for episcopacy) but before Calvin, and those who reformed with him, about one hundred and sixty years last past: I say, though what is done is sufficient to satisfy any indifferent and unbiassed judgment; yet is there one topic left behind, which, with our Dissenters, weighs more than all fathers and councils, and that is the late reformation, from whence some date their very Christianity. And if even by this, too, episcopacy should be witnessed and approved, then is there nothing at all in the world left to the opposers of episcopacy, nothing of antiquity, precedent, or any authority, but their own wilful will against all ages of the whole Catholic church, even that of the reformation, as well as all the rest.

Let us then examine: first, for the church of England; that is thrown off clearly by our Dissenters, for that was reformed under episcopacy, and continues so to this day.

And as to our neighbour nation of Scotland, where the Presbyterians do boast that the reformation was made by Presbyters; that is most clearly and authentically confuted by a late learned and worthy author (already mentioned) in his fundamental charter of Presbytery, printed 1695, so as to stop the mouths of the most perverse, who will not be persuaded, though they are persuaded.

Go we then abroad, and see the state of the reformed churches there.

The Lutherans are all cut off, as the church of England; for they still retain episcopacy, as in Denmark, Sweden, &c.

There remains now only the Calvinists: here it is the Presbyterians set up their rest: this is their strong foundation.

And this will fail them as much as all the other; for, be it known unto them, (however they will receive it) that Calvin himself, and Beza, and the rest of the learned reformers of their part, did give their testimony for episcopacy as much as any. They counted it a most unjust reproach upon them to think that they condemned episcopacy, which they say they did not throw off, but could not have it there, in Geneva, without coming under the Papal hierarchy: they highly applauded and congratulated the episcopal hierarchy of the church of England, as in their several letters to Queen Elizabeth, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and others of our English Bishops: they prayed heartily to God for the continuance and preservation of it; bemoaned their own unhappy circumstances, that they could not have the like, because they had no magistrate to protect them; and wished for episcopacy in their churches, the want of which they owned as a great defect; but called it their misfortune, rather than their fault: as the learned of the French Hugonots have likewise pleaded on their behalf.

As for their excuse, I do not now meddle with it, for I think it was not a good one. They might have had Bishops from other places, though there were none among themselves, but those who were popish: and they might as well have had Bishops as Presbyters without the countenance of the civil magistrate. It might have raised a greater persecution against them; but that is nothing as to the truth of the thing; and if they thought it a truth, they ought to have suffered for it.

But whatever becomes of their excuse, here it is plain, that they gave their suffrage for episcopacy; which who so pleases may see at large in Dr. Durel's *View of the Government and Worship in the reformed Churches beyond the Seas*, (who was himself one of them) printed 1662.

So that our modern Presbyterians have departed from Calvin as well as from Luther, in their abhorrence of episcopacy, from all the Christian world in all ages, and particularly from all our late reformers both of one sort and other.

Calvin would have anathemized all of them, had he lived in our times. He says there were none such to be found in his time, who opposed the episcopal hierarchy, but only the papal, which aspired to an universal supremacy in the see of Rome over the whole Catholic church, which is the prerogative of Christ alone. But, says he,

“ If they would give us such an hierarchy, in which the Bishops should so excel, as that they did not refuse to be subject to Christ, and to depend upon him as their only head, and refer all to him; then I will confess that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any such shall be found, who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience.”

See, he says, *si qui erunt*, if there shall be any such, which supposes that he knew none such, and that he owned none such amongst his reformers; and that if ever any such should arise, he thought there were no anathemas which they did not deserve who should refuse to submit to the episcopal hierarchy, without such an universal head as excludes Christ from being the only universal head; for if there be another, (though substitute) he is not only. Thus he is called the chief Bishop, but never the only Bishop, because there are others deputed under him: but he calls no Bishop the universal Bishop, or head of the Catholic church, because he has appointed no substitute in that supreme office; as not of universal King, so neither of universal Bishop.

And Beza supposes as positively as Calvin had done, that there were none who did oppose the episcopal hierarchy without such an universal head now upon earth, or that opposed the order of episcopacy, and condemns them as madmen if any such could be found. For thus says he,

“ If there be any (which you shall hardly persuade me to believe) who reject the whole order of episcopacy, God forbid that any man in his wits should assent to the madness of such men !”

And particularly as to the church of England, and her hierarchy of Archbishops and Bishops, he says that he never meant to oppugn any thing of that, but calls it a singular blessing of God, and wishes that she may ever enjoy it.

So that our modern Presbyterians are disarmed of the precedent of Calvin, Beza, and all the reformers abroad, by whose sentence they are anathematized, and counted as madmen.

Here then, let us consider and beware of the fatal progress of error! Calvin, and the reformers with him, set up Presbyterian

government, as they pretended by necessity, but still kept up and professed the highest regard to the episcopal character and authority: but those who pretend to follow their example, have utterly abdicated the whole order of episcopacy as anti-christian, and an insupportable grievance; while at the same time they would seem to pay the greatest reverence to these reformers, and much more to the authority of the first and purest ages of Christianity, whose fathers and councils spoke all the high things before quoted in behalf of episcopacy, far beyond the language of our later apologists for that hierarchy, or what durst now be repeated, except from such unquestionable authority.

In this they imitate the hardness of the Jews, who built the sepulchre of those prophets whom their fathers slew, while at the same time they adhered to, and outdid the wickedness of their fathers in persecuting the successors of those prophets.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEREAS I have placed the apostolical canons in the front of the councils before quoted, I thought fit (to prevent needless cavil) to give this advertisement, that I do not contend they were made by the Apostles themselves, but by the holy fathers of the church, about the end of the second and beginning of the third century, as a summary of that discipline, which had been transmitted to them by uninterrupted tradition from the Apostles, whence they have justly obtained the name of The Apostolical Canons; and, as such, have been received and revered in the succeeding ages of Christianity.

The councils quoted after these canons bear their proper dates, and there can be no contest about them.

And what is quoted of St. Ignatius and the other fathers, is from the most uncontroverted parts of their works, to obviate the objection of interpolations and additions, by the noise of which our adversaries endeavour to throw off, or enervate their whole authority, and quite to disarm us of all that light which we have from the primitive ages of the church, because it makes all against them, and that they can no otherwise struggle from under the weight of their authority.

AN

ENQUIRY

WHENCE COMETH WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING TO MAN?

IN WHICH IT IS ATTEMPTED TO SHEW,

- I. That Religion entered the World by Revelation, and that Language was from the same Original.
- II. That without the Aid of Revelation, Man had not been a rational, or a religious Creature.
- III. That nothing can oblige the Conscience, but the revealed Word of God.
- IV. That a State Religion, or Law of Nature, never existed but in the human Imagination.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED SOME YEARS AGO BEFORE A LEARNED AUDIENCE,

BY JOHN ELLIS, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. CATHERINE'S DUBLIN:

AND AUTHOR OF A BOOK ENTITLED,

The Knowledge of divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason, or Nature.

THE

PREFACE.

IT has ever been accounted laudable to attempt opening new paths to knowledge; and if that which follows be hitherto almost untrodden, we may hope, the better it is known, the more it will be frequented: there is, at least, no obstacle in the way, to prevent a candid enquirer after truth, from entering into, and making a trial of it. Its only objects are, the honour of God, the dignity of man, and the just excellence of reason. Nor is any thing offered, for the promotion of these great ends, but what rests on the authority of Scripture, the frame of human nature, the capacity of our rational faculties, and the experience of all ages: to them is the appeal made, without disguise, art, or sophistry.

And if simplicity be a recommendation, it has a just claim thereto; being throughout strait, regular, and consistent. There are no turnings to the right hand, or to the left; no doubts, entanglements, or metaphysical delusions, to contend with: all is plain nature, so that a wayfaring man, of the lowest, if honest, apprehensions amongst us, cannot err therein.

Another advantage is, that it stands not in need of making, at some times those bold advances, at others as hasty retreats; which perpetually involve learned men in contradictions, or incoherencies, who endeavour to incorporate natural religion with that which is revealed.

We all know with what reluctance the mind is brought to give up principles it was early taught to receive as true. But if human knowledge be still capable of improvement, whatever is candidly offered to such purpose, deserves an examination, before it be rejected. With this view the following sheets are submitted to the learned world; not out of love to novelty, but from a long and serious conviction, that no other hypothesis can give that true obligation to religion, without which it is of little worth; this therefore merits not censure, though it misses approbation.

If what is said on Language seems, at first, remote; it is, because no subject, that deserves so much attention, has received so little: or it has been my misfortune not to meet with any author, who thoroughly considered the origin or extent of it. Had Mr. Locke indeed taken it into his original plan, the necessity of which he afterwards saw, but too late; ideas of sensation and reflexion would certainly have been restrained within closer limits than they now are: and an essay so framed under his masterly hand, been one of the most finished pieces among human productions.

Mr. Locke, however, is not infallible: and if any dissent from him on this, or other account, they have a right to say, as he did, in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, “ The makers of systems, and their followers, may invent and use what distinctions they please, and call things by what names they think fit; but I cannot allow to them, or to any man, an authority to make a religion for me, or to alter that which God hath revealed.”

The other heads, for ease and method sake thrown into sections, would bear a much fuller explanation than the brevity of a discourse allows (being indeed abstracts from larger works, intended for a continuation to the first volume on divine knowledge, but will now, probably, never see the light) yet may serve as hints, for minds of greater abilities to improve, and raise a fairer superstructure on: most of them being supported by names of allowed eminence, though no friends to the cause before us; and all judged capable of a strict and proper demonstration.

AN

ENQUIRY, &c.



ROM. x. 17.

SO THEN, FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY
THE WORD OF GOD.

AFTER the knowledge of God, the most excellent and valuable man, is that of himself. And as reason gives him the pre-eminence above other sublunary creatures, it must be an enquiry of great importance for directing the mind in its search after truth, **WHENCE COMETH WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING TO MAN?** For with the royal preacher, it was a point of wisdom to know “whose gift she is.” *Wisd. viii. 21.*

To this the Scripture was a plain solution (1st.) in general, “it is God that teacheth man knowledge, and the inspiration of “the Almighty giveth him understanding,” *Ps. xciv. 10.* which *Job* also teaches in the same words, *ch. xxxii. 8.* (2dly,) With regard to divine and spiritual matters, they particularly inform us, *Heb. xi. 1.* that “faith,” or an assent of the understanding, grounded solely on the attestation of God, “is the evidence,” the only assurance and proof “of things not seen,” or of whatever does not fall under the cognisance of the senses.

This shews whence the impossibility, noted in the context, arises, of mens any way acknowledging the true God, *Jehovah* (for such is the original word in the prophet *Joel*) without a superior assistance. “For how shall they believe in him, of whom they “have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (*Joel ii. 32.*) or one to instruct them in such knowledge. For the Gentiles were “of the olive tree, which is wild by nature,”

(Rom. xi. 24.) and without fresh grafting and cultivation, could not produce fruit; on which account, "in times past they had not believed God." Rom. v. 30. Because they had not heard of him. "If so," then says the Apostle, the inference from these premises is, "that faith cometh by hearing," or instruction through the vehicle of language, "and hearing," the canal of such knowledge supplied, "by the word of God."

It seems then incontestibly plain from the inspired writings, that men neither did, nor could, know the true God, but from external information; and that the only knowledge of invisibilities, as to their existence or nature, is from Revelation. And if this foundation be of God, it standeth sure; "for other no man can lay." 1 Cor. iii. 11.

But how then comes it to pass, that Revelation, if the sole conveyer of divine knowledge, has so long hung down its head; and reason been placed among Christians, in the chair of infallibility, as the inventor, arbiter, and judge of things, both human and divine? This, among other causes, may have been greatly owing to the strange prepossession, long handed down, which the world had conceived, in favour of common notions, innate ideas, and the like; as if the mind could in them, as in a mirror, behold the reflexion of all truths.

Mr. Locke indeed totally overthrew these unphilosophical and absurd non-entities. But as natural religion was then, and still is, with the MANY, the catholic one; few treatises on that subject appear, without having constant recourse to "inward signatures, congenite impressions, inbred opinions, notions grafted in, and written upon the heart, interwoven with our very nature, springing up from the natural fæcundity of the mind, &c. &c." for no visibly good reason, but that such a religion cannot be supported but by such proofs; though they neither can, nor ought to be relied on, since, as our excellent Pearson observes, "we are assured, God never chargeth us with the knowledge of him upon that account." In Art. 1.

It is however the voice of the pulpit and the schools: That man has faculties sufficient to furnish him with all necessary truths. That he not only could, but did, discover all the duties he owes to God, his neighbour, or himself, before any revelation was made to the world. That God never gave a law to mankind before the days of Moses. That a general declaration of his will was never made to the world before the preaching of the Gospel. That na-

tural religion must be pre-supposed, as the foundation of that which is revealed; and that it could not subsist without it. With many other positions of the like kind.

Were reason indeed able to do all this, revelation would certainly be useless, as they would have it: nor would it be easy to justify the wisdom of God in giving one; since it could answer no end, which man was not well qualified to attain without it. But a FEW, on the contrary, are of opinion, that reason is no way debased, by saying, that man stood in need of a superior light to discover all the intellectual truths, necessary to his perfection, in this world, and the other: and that these were communicated to him by immediate instruction from God himself.

To confirm this hypothesis, is the intent of the following discourse; or to prove that religion entered the world by revelation. Which being a subject of the most interesting nature, as an enquiry into the truth, and obligation, of that religion we profess; if the arguments brought in support of it do not convince, they should not offend. And to answer both views, shall rest the whole on these principles.

That the Scriptures, as received by us, are the word of God.

That the word of God is infallibly true.

“ That the veracity of God, is as capable of making us know a proposition to be true, as any other way of proof can be; and, therefore, we do not, in such a case, barely believe, but know, such a proposition to be true, and attain certainty.” Locke’s 2d Reply to Bp. of Worc. p. 498. Dublin edit.

§. 1st. The first thing to be considered, as the foundation of our enquiry, is the nature of REVELATION. Which, in its primary meaning, is only to make something known that before was secret. Now, the possibility of this cannot be questioned of God, who has infinite methods of discovering himself; nor of man’s being capable of receiving it, because he that made the soul, can operate upon it, in any manner suitable to its faculties. And as to *matter*; could God communicate nothing, in whole, or in part, but what man already knew, or could comprehend the extent

of his knowledge must be finite as man's, or man's infinite as God's.

And as the Almighty worketh nothing in vain, those persons, to whom he revealed himself, did, by virtue of such revelation, perceive, know, and assure themselves, that he who spake to them was God: so that at the same time they clearly understood both what was delivered, and by whom. See Pearson, Art. 1.

As to the frequency of such revelations, the Scriptures assure us, (Heb. i. 1.) "that God, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spake in time past to the fathers." Before the flood, to Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, &c. After it, to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Particularly, God conversed with Adam, immediately after his creation. The first words of the serpent to Eve, prove her knowledge of him. As it is also evident of Cain, when he contended with, and went out from the presence of the Lord.

Now, if God had no end in creating man, but to know and serve his Maker, it seems as consistent with the divine goodness to instruct him in all things necessary to those great purposes, as to make him such a creature as he did: nor can such a constant intercourse be accounted for in any other manner, so becoming of God, or perfective of man. And had he been intended for a self-taught, self-sufficient creature, the whole transaction of God with him, must have been entirely useless, or frustrated the very end of sending him into the world; neither of which can be admitted. But Adam had wants both in body and mind; and if God planted a garden for food and delight, we cannot conceive him less mindful of the intellectual part, created after his own image.

§ 2d. It appears that God had frequent converse with man, therefore, to advance him in the highest wisdom, the knowledge and service of his Maker, or the whole of what is called RELIGION; consequently it must, at this time, and in this manner, have entered the world. Or, if we define it to be doing whatever we are obliged to by God, it will include both faith and practice; a right knowledge of his nature and promises; and a service agreeable to his will. If then right apprehensions of the divine attributes be, confessedly, the ground of all religion, they must have

been well known, before there could be any such thing, or man have speculated about it.

We are, again, assured on all hands, that "man by nature is under an impossibility of knowing the will of God," (Pearson Creed, art. 8. p. 327.) "and unavoidably ignorant of it," (Dr. Clarke, Boyle Lect. pt. 2d.) as what none could declare but God himself. Therefore must have made a revelation of it, before man could be under any obligation to observe it, or capable of giving a service well-pleasing to him.

If then, the first men, as Scripture assures us, walked "with God, before him, pleased, and were accepted of him;" we must believe they had a revelation of the divine will: because without a rule, there can be no demand of obedience; no subjection to pleasure, or displeasure; rewards or punishments.

The first, and most eminent part of worship, was sacrifice, instituted from the beginning, appointed for the expiation of sin; and which for ever ceased when the great oblation was offered. What then should prevent our looking upon it as a federal rite of the new covenant, and coeval with it, as that was with the sin of man? for there could be no acceptance without remission, no remission without blood, no faith without promises, nor promises without a covenant. Therefore, if God regards not will-worship, Abel's faith, in that act, must have been a firm trust of receiving pardon, and an eternal inheritance through the promised Messiah, whereby he "obtained witness that he was righteous." Heb. xi. 4.

So awful and irresistible is the force of truth, as to have induced many learned assertors of natural religion, from considering the first state of man, to acknowledge the necessity of a revelation being then given. Because the counsels, and free determinations of God concerning man; his present duty, or future existence, are secrets, which all flesh is excluded from. Without it, he could not possibly have known the will, or intentions of his Maker towards him: whence his original, whither his end, what was required, or upon what terms God would proceed with him in justice, or in mercy.

They therefore confess, "that religion must have entered the world by revelation." (Butler's Analogy.) For, "what only could make the first men so enlightened, as Scripture represents them, was revelation; and, that allowed, dispute is at an end." (Waiburton Divine Legat.) And another, "If God had not

vouchsafed to teach mankind what they ought to *know*, and *do*, both before and since the fall, we must have been in perfect ignorance of God, and all religion, from the beginning of the world, till now.”

§ 3d. But thirdly, as the Apostle twice mentions this conveyance of knowledge, by HEARING; it certainly includes more than is commonly imagined, and coming from such authority merits a due consideration, in what manner it is applicable to, or consistent with the human frame. In which enquiry, there is no flying from the will, to the power of God: we are not to examine, what he can do, but what he has done; not what he might have made man, but what he did. And if we judge from Scripture, experience, and self-consciousness; his truest definition will perhaps be found, to be an animal capable of speech; and, through that medium, of reason, and religion.

For there is a wide difference between a capacity of acting, and the act itself. A watch, or other machine, fitted up with admirable skill, and perfect in all its parts, cannot put itself in motion; neither can the mind: yet one is a real watch without measuring of time; the other has a real capacity for thinking, but without thought. Both remain potentially so, till put into actual motion, by some external agency.

Thus, the intellectual faculties have a power to work, when supplied with materials to work upon, and not before; the mind is then carried into action, its secret springs exert their proper activity, and the rational frame enabled to think and reason.

If we consider the nature of speech, something so supernaturally divine appears to all who have duly weighed it, Heathens, Jews, Christians, orthodox, and Atheists*, that they pronounce it to surpass the invention of men. Learned Whitby was so far convinced of language being the immediate gift of God, as to think it a clear demonstration, that the original of mankind was as Moses delivered it; from the impossibility of giving any other tolerable account of the origin of language. Attributes, V. 2. Sermon. 2. p. 28.

And indeed every article in those short memorials of the first passages after the creation, imply an instruction by this means; it

* Even Hobbes could say, God taught Adam this useful invention. Leviathan, c. 4.

being inconceivable that man should understand the words of God, before he was taught them. Whence it is generally allowed by all writers, "that though Adam had a capacity, and organs admirably contrived for speech, yet in his case, there was a necessity of his being immediately instructed by God, because it was impossible he should have invented speech, and words to be spoken, so soon as his necessities required." See Bp. Williams, Boyle Lect.

But there is still in this subject, a mine of rich ore, hitherto little known, or sought for; which wants some abler hand to search into, sift, and purify it. Let us however break the ground, by offering a few hints to shew; that till man had language given him he could not be a rational creature: which will amount to a demonstration, if it appears, that he can no more think than speak without words; but that these are as necessarily prior to both, as causes to their effects.

Let us then briefly observe in this procedure; that the mind cannot think upon nothing; that things themselves cannot enter the mind, but the signs of them may; that words are the marks of essence, by which it distinguishes things, one from another; and till furnished with them, is incapable of acting. This Mr. Wollaston, (§ 5. p. 122.) proves at large, and appeals for the truth of what he advances, or, that a man cannot think without words, to every one's observation of what passeth within himself. Nor is it possible to be otherwise, because words are the only bodies, or vehicles, by which the sense and meaning of all propositions are conveyed; so that till the mind is stored with them, it has nothing to judge by, think, or reason upon.

Mr. Locke must have given great light into this remote and delicate subject, had he taken language into his original plan. He saw the defect, but too late, yet grants enough for our purpose, "That the mind is as white paper, void of all characters." *Ess. l. 2. c. 1. § 2.* has no writings, signatures, or impressions, which are the corner stone of natural religion. Whence then has it the materials of knowledge? not altogether from ideas of sensation and reflexion. But, "as all men, in their thinking and reasoning, make use of words," *L. 4. c. 5. § 4.* that is, can neither think or reason without them; therefore, "God furnished man with language;—and altho' he had by nature his organs so fashioned, as to be fit to frame articulate sounds, which we call words, this was not sufficient to produce language;" *L. 3. c. 1. § 1.* that was not to be attained, but by a supernatural aid,

which shews the weakness of our minute philosophers, who, on this subject, are always supposing that men did, and an hord of savages now may, invent a language.

It was also "farther necessary, that he should be able to use these sounds, as signs of internal conceptions, and to make them stand as marks for the ideas within his own mind, whereby they might be made known to others, and the thoughts of men's minds be conveyed from one to another." (Ib. § 2.) So that without words, men could not understand, learn, or teach, any thing that was said.

And as "the mind makes words to stand for the real essences of things," L. 3. c. 10. § 18. it could not, in the absence of things, without words, distinguish, judge of, think, or reason upon them; having no marks whereby they could be recollected, or presented to the intellectual faculties. Whence, "the extent and certainty of knowledge has so near a connexion with words, that unless their force and manner of signification be first well observed, there can be very little said clearly and pertinently concerning knowledge;" L. 3. c. 9. § 21. that is, we could know nothing, be certain of nothing. "And were language, as the instrument of knowledge, more thoroughly weighed, the way to knowledge would lie a great deal opener than it does." Ib.

Certainly, for knowledge is not to be had, without the proper instrument and means of attaining it. And language being the only path, or avenue, to wisdom, shews the force of our Apostle's divine philosophy, "That faith cometh by hearing, and hearing "by the word of God;" that being the only conduit in receiving or conveying truth. For all we learn is *by* words, all we think is *in* words, and without them, could neither learn, think, or teach, much less have the most distant conception of "things not "seen."

The illation seems very plain. Language cannot be contrived without thought and knowledge: but the mind cannot have thought or knowledge till it has language: therefore language must be previously taught, before man could become a rational creature: and none could teach him but God*.

* We think it may be useful here to note, that though Mr. Locke allows to *words* no other use but that of recording our own thoughts, or communicating them to others; we understand from Divine Revelation, that the first use of words was, to communicate the thoughts of God; which could not be done but in the words of God.

An additional light may be cast on this subject, from observing the prodigious use of NAMES, in acquiring, and retaining knowledge: for they being the objects of thought, the mind can neither describe, define, or even conceive any substance, till acquainted with the name, and meaning of it: as that not only distinguishes substances from each other, but is (as some speak) the mark both of essence and union; the bond which ties together the several properties peculiar to each, and that constitutes things what they are. For the qualities and powers of substances, which make up the complex idea of them, are images too subtile and fleeting for the mind to detain, without some mark of essence whereunto it can annex them.

On what other account, but to have a right knowledge of the creatures, over which a dominion was given, did God bring before Adam every beast of the field, and fowl of the air, to see what he would call them? and "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." Gen. ii. 19. Nor is it reasonable to imagine, that God should thus miraculously instruct him in the knowledge of his fellow-creatures, before that of his Creator. On the contrary, we find the words God, and Lord God, used upwards of forty times, in the two first chapters of Genesis, which were names, and marks, not only of existence, but of all the glorious perfections revealed of the nature. Hence, the name of God, in numberless passages of Scripture, stands for God himself.

For as a name cannot be given to what we have no notion of; and man is invincibly ignorant of "things not seen:" so neither could he discover, understand, or apply, any attribute or property, till he knew the name of the substance, to which alone they appertained; and no information of them could be had, but from the word of God, that is, revelation*.

The subject is inexhaustible. It however appears, that the mind can have no other objects of thought, but words, and names; which therefore must be prior to recollection, reflexion, or any mode of thinking. And it is as great an absurdity to say, that a man without reason, could create language for the instrument of reason; as that he could create a world for himself, before he was in being.

* Some of the Greek Fathers say, that God must be unnameable, but by himself, because there was none other before him, to give him a name.—Plato δὲ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἴσιν αὐτῷ. Parmenid.

For the rational faculty consists in a power to exert its several operations, on the materials it receives and understands ; to record, or dispose of them in their proper cells ; to call forth, and separately consider them ; to divide, compare, and judge of their agreement or disagreement ; and thereby becomes able to form propositions, and draw conclusions ; that is, to think and reason.

But the instrumental cause of reason must be previous to it. What was previous to reason must be taught by some intelligent agent. No such agent was prior to the first man, but God (or spiritual beings at his appointment.) What he taught, was by revelation. Consequently, revelation was (or there can be no error in believing so) the first principle of all knowledge, and the means whereby the Creator intended man should become both a rational and religious creature. (See APPENDIX A.)

§ 4th. That revelation was the origin of religion, as well as of speech and reason, will appear from considering the true state of man at his first entrance into the world.

The endowments which distinguished him from other animals, were the capacity of reason, and a freedom of will ; one to understand the law, which was to be his rule of action ; the other, to determine his will, when at perfect liberty, whether to obey, or not. For the law must be known before it can be a rule ; and when known, it is the choice of intelligent beings which makes an action their own, so as thereby to become accountable creatures, or capable of rewards and punishments, to which nothing subjects them but voluntary, chosen actions.

The proper state to exercise these peculiar faculties must be that of probation, and without a law given they could neither be tried or proved ; nor could that have any force without sanctions annexed. God therefore entered into a *covenant* with man, wherein it was stipulated, that obedience should entitle him to the rewards, disobedience subject him to the penalty of the law.

Such was the first state of man : God gave him a perfect declaration of his will, or, of whatever was required of him to *know* or *do*. The covenant then entered into was that of *WORKS* : the condition ; " do this, and live." Luke x. 28. A sinless obedience was demanded. The reward, a translation to the presence and enjoyment of God in heaven, without a separation of soul and body. The punishment, death, temporal and eternal.

Two things must here be carefully noted. (1st.) That none could declare, promise, or confer, an eternal life, but the eternal God. (2dly.) That where a sinless obedience was required, the law must be full and perfect, an exact measure of acting, not the least part defective, no duty to be observed, or that could possibly be broken, which was not plainly propounded and understood. For as without a law, there can be neither obedience or transgression; so an imperfect law is a contradiction, as being a rule that cannot regulate.

We may add; its seems no way incongruous with the divine wisdom, to have given man a consistent scheme of religion, the best adapted, and most suitable to his faculties, which should oblige the whole race of mankind, then virtually in Adam.

Such, there is great reason to believe, was the law in paradise; that it began with time, and shall not end but when eternity commences, without having the least tittle altered, whilst human nature, and the present frame of things endure.

§ 5th. On the breach of the first covenant, God vouchsafed to admit man into a second, or that of Grace. And if revelation was necessary in his state of innocence, much more so must it be in that of apostacy, to preserve him from an utter desperation; since on forfeiting the divine favour, he had no further claim to it, nor could have the least certainty of his Creator's goodness, or will, relating to his eternal welfare; nor any hopes of escaping that dreadful punishment he had incurred.

Every thing here is so far beyond the reach of human reason, that, when declared, it is the most astonishing event that falls within the compass of it. So that to reveal a design of mercy, and a promise of forgiveness, through a Messiah, was a stupendous instance of divine benignity; and as necessary to man's present comfort, as redemption was to his future happiness.

In this amazing transaction, we must look higher than any dealings had with man, viz. to the eternal purposes of God concerning his restoration; wherein "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii. 8. And "the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus i. 2. As also "grace," at the same time "given." 2 Tim. i. 9.

Is it then possible to believe, that a covenant should be established, a promise made, and a grace given to obtain it; yet the

person, for whose benefit alone they were intended, should have no knowledge or assurance of them? This is what neither reason, nor religion, can suppose.

Here it must also be remembered, (1st.) that there was no change in the original law, but only in the conditions of the covenant; instead of a perfect obedience, a sincere one, with faith and repentance, was now required; whereby a deliverance from penalty, and a new way to immortality, were opened. (2dly.) That sinners should be saved; by what method, or on what terms, re-admitted into favour; yet the law satisfied, and the truth of an immutable decree preserved; where secrets hid in God, what no created intelligence could discover, or comprehend. The angels still "desire to look into" this mystery, but cannot fathom it; for the "love of Christ passeth knowledge."

Thus was a Redeemer ordained in heaven, revealed in paradise, believed by the patriarchs, spoken of by the prophets, and relied on by all. The inference then is just, that the essentials of true piety were from the beginning: for what is religion, but first to know the true God, and then, by faith and obedience, through the merits of the Messiah, to hope for remission of sins, and eternal life? every article of which entered the world by revelation.

It has also been said by learned men, that supposing the history of our first parents, as Moses relates it, to be true, we have a plain argument, that our Maker, from the beginning, designed, and appointed, all that the Gospel requires of us*. And who, but an atheist, or deist, can suppose it not to be true?

§ 6th. The whole of religion consists in this; "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. xv. 16, 18. Let us then further enquire, when the commands of God were at first given, and in what manner continued.

Grotius tells us, "that God three several times gave a law, which obliged all mankind, to whom the knowledge of it came, after the creation, after the flood, and by Christ †."

The father of the first world received the commands immediately from God. These were handed down with purity, to the parent of the second, a preacher of righteousness, who drew

* Bishop Bradford, Boyle Lect.

† De Jur. Bel. & P. l. 1. c. 2. § 16, 17.

up a summary of them, ever after called, the statutes of Adam, as derived from him; or the precepts of the sons of Noah, who transmitted them to succeeding generations. Of these, Moses speaks, before he came to Sinai, as his rule of judging between the people; "I do make them know the statutes of God and his laws." Exod. xviii. 16.

The Jews also ever allowed, that the Gentiles who observed them, were entitled to the kingdom of heaven, as being the only essential duties which bound all mankind, and what no place or age could dispense with. For the decalogue was not a new set of laws, but a repetition of the former, and in substance the very same.

Our Saviour also repeats every commandment, as said of old, in ancient times, or from the beginning; and neither added to, nor diminished from them*. They contained the love of God, and of our neighbour, on which hang all the law and the prophets: these Christ came to fulfil, and declared, that not a tittle thereof should fail, till heaven and earth pass away.

Let it also be observed, that as the 10th commandment is the seal to, and a fence round all the rest, by forbidding evil thoughts, as well as outward acts, not to commit adultery with the eye, or murder in the heart; it necessarily follows, that the revealed will of God not only commands, but determines the fitness and obligation of, what are called, moral actions. For if no human tribunal can prescribe rules to men's thoughts or desires, how they shall think, and what they shall love; it is impossible that reason should have framed these commands, because none but an all-wise God, who knows the hearts of men, can take hold of what no eye sees; give laws to, bind, and subject to punishment, the most secret irregularities.

So that if truth, and purity of heart, be any part of morality, it must depend on the revealed will of God, and is the same with religion. If they are not, whatever nature or reason may be said

* Dr. Clarke grants that the commandments were originally delivered by God, and as expounded to us by Christ, are still in substance the same. Catec. p. 149. Dr. Whitby denies that our Saviour added one precept not virtually contained therein. Append. in Mat. 5. Mr. Locke affirms, that the rule of the covenant of works was never abolished, though the rigour were abated. The duties enjoined in it, are duties still; their obligation had never ceased, nor a wilful neglect of them ever dispensed with. Reason. of Christianity, p. 216, 255.

to advance, will prove of little worth or comfort to a serious christian*.

Another observation is, that the duties of both tables are equally positive, enjoined by special revelation, before men could speculate about them. And as God never established a covenant, without appointing some outward signs, or memorials, as pledges of his promises, and man's obedience; the truest distinction of duties perhaps may be, into legal and federal precepts of the law, and precepts of the covenant. Both are positively commanded, by the same divine authority: and let men call them what they please, where Goes does not remit the obligation, no human devices can.

§ 7th. The next step in our enquiry is, whether, and in what manner such a body of laws, or religion, were known to the world. And after premising the necessity of carrying in our thought the vast difference between the patriarchal and mosaical law, the confounding of which has produced great errors and mistakes, we may leave the decision of the present question to the learned Bishop Cumberland, who allows, and fully proves, that the patriarchs, both before and after the flood, had laws revealed, and promulged, by the supreme authority, directing their voluntary actions to the chief happiness of man, armed with the sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments, and which extended to all mankind †.

* Bishop Burnet says, "the foundation of morality is religion; and that the sense of God, that he is, and that he is a rewarder and punisher, is a foundation of religion," in Art. 7, p. 102. Whence it will follow, that if such future sanctions are not knowable by natural reason, it could not infer any obligation (which is founded in them) on moral duties.—So others affirm, that the fitness of virtue to the nature of things, is far from superinducing any obligation, or laying any foundation for natural conscience. See Dr. Handcock, Boyle Lect. Therefore duties so derived, are neither law, nor gospel, nor any thing worth contending for.

† De leg. Patriarchal, p. 401, &c. This he explains at large; and shews from many undeniable instances, that the patriarchs had diligently observed all the great commands which respect God or man, long before the tables were given at Sinai, (p. 443.) And remarks, that Moses seems to have wrote the whole history preceding the decalogue, for prudent readers to learn, that one God, the creator and preserver of men, had governed them (as servants of one God, and sons of one man, whether Adam or Noah, p. 402.) by laws agreeable to those he was about to give his peculiar people, p. 412. For the ten commandments were only the chief heads of the law given of old to the patriarchs, p. 447.—And our own great Selden has shewn, it was the opinion of all the primitive christians, as well as his own, that God declared to mankind, from the very beginning of things, that he would be a rewarder of the good, and render to every man according to his works. I. N. & G. L. 1. c. 2. § 6.

So clearly does this illustrious defender of nature not only confirm our main position, but also what has been suggested, that as there is an unity of design through all the works of God, and the whole material system is directed, by some never-ceasing principle, to its appointed end, so it is not unreasonable to suppose the rational part of this lower creation should have some standing law whereby to live here, and be judged hereafter.

That such a rule did subsist from the beginning, appears undeniable, from the many patriarchs who walked with God, and were found righteous before him. The signal instances of faith, and immoveable expectations of a life to come, also demonstrate a preceding revelation of the divine promises. "For as to eternal rewards and punishments, natural law knows nothing of them*."

St. Paul indeed says, 2 Tim. i. 10, "that Christ brought life and immortality to light." But the word *φωτισαυτ*, properly signifies to illustrate, cast greater light on, and more clearly discover, what was known before: no other exposition is reconcilable with scripture; and the same Apostle confirms it, Heb. xi. that "the fathers died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, plainly declaring that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." And the hope of all good men, was to enjoy "the pleasures which are at God's right hand, for evermore." Psal. xvi. 11. Our Saviour says, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life;" John v. 39. which proves their belief of that article, and their agreement that it was revealed in the holy writings.

So our own church teaches, (Art. 7.) "that both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ." For it was a standing revelation; part of the "everlasting Gospel preached unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people †." Rev. xiv. 6.

* Cumberland, ib. p. 407.

† And though some object, that the words everlasting life, are not to be found in the books of Moses; yet even Bishop Burnet allows, "that it is clear Moses did all along suppose the being of God, the creation of the world, the promise of the Messiah, and a future state, as things well known, and carried down by tradition to his days," in Art. 7.

Particulars of the pious and holy men of old, are needless; when the Apostle, after the list of heroes recorded, adds, “that time would fail him to enumerate all who wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, &c.” Heb. xi. They are noble instances of an amazing fortitude, and unshaken zeal, by which in all things they became more than conquerors; and by having respect to a future recompence, obtained a good report, and are set forth as ensamples to us. Ensamples equalled by few, excelled by none!

And in what do the prophetick writings differ from the Gospel? both preach repentance for the remission of sins, persuade men to forsake their evil ways, and then promise that God would remember their iniquities no more. In consequence of which, no humiliations can be deeper, no sorrow for guilt more afflicting, no conversion more sincere, or supplications for pardon and acceptance more earnest, than what every where occur in the patriarchal and succeeding ages.

It is also observable, that as their religion and hopes chiefly centred in the Messiah, their notices of him, from the earliest times, were so frequent, that every prophet who arose in Israel, spake plainly of him. “Receive (says St. Peter) the salvation of your souls; of which salvation (through Christ) the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, &c.” 1 Ep. i. 19. So that every age had its evangelists. The passion and resurrection of Christ, (through which alone salvation could be had) with the glory that should follow, were articles of the prophets, as well as of the Apostles Creed.

If then “the grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men,” Tit. ii. 11. and the patriarchs were saved by it, what difference is there between their law and ours? for, when all is said, to believe in the true God and his Messiah; a remission of sins through him, on a sincere obedience and repentance: a resurrection; the soul’s survivance; and a future state of rewards and punishments; ever were, and will be, the sum of all religion.

This they did: but there could be no knowledge of the covenant, or its conditions, till declared; no faith in a Messiah, till revealed; no proof of obedience, without a law; no subjection to rewards or punishments, without a freedom of choice; no power to do what is well pleasing to God, without the aid of his holy Spirit. Hence the judicious Mede owns that the Gospel, or

glad tidings of salvation, to be attained by Christ, were as ancient as the time of man's sin, and afterwards repeated and continued, p. 110.

§ 8th. Of the Mosaical law, little need be said, as being of a late date, and narrow extent. The patriarchal was from the beginning, and renewed to many: thus, "God preached, before, the Gospel to Abraham." Gal. iii. 8. That is, before his circumcision; and this notice of justification by a Messiah was revealed to him, who had been bred in idolatry 430 years before the law of Moses. Nor was the decalogue any part of this law: Moses plainly distinguishes them; "The Lord delivered unto you his covenant, even the ten commandments." Deut. iv. 13. They had been long under both; and Moses was only the messenger, not the lawgiver.

God delivered one; the other was wrote by Moses in a book, after their falling into idolatry, Exod. xxiv. 7. and laid upon them as a punishment, or burthen, rather than a religion, having nothing of true piety in it. God himself says, "I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them." Ezek. xx. 11. These were the precepts of old, renewed at Sinai, and had the promise of life: "notwithstanding they rebelled against me," "wherefore I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." Ezek. xx. 21. v. 25. As the commands of God, they were bound to observe them; but the strictest obedience thereto did not entitle to life.

Many were the essential differences between these laws. The patriarchal was to endure for ever: the mosaical but for a time. That obliged all mankind: this only a small colony, to whom it was a separate municipal constitution; as charters to a body of citizens, who are nevertheless bound by the common law of the land.

The observation then that arises, is, that if the pious Jews were saved under it, they were not saved by it. It could punish or remit offences, committed against its own ordinances according as the case was; but "not purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." Heb. ix. 14. Eternal life and death were no part of it; but still remained in force, as sanctions of the original law and covenant.

Hence the frequent assurances, that sins were not remitted, nor justification to be had from the observance of it : yet the Hebrews never doubted that the most presumptuous sins, idolatry, murder, injustice, or oppression, for which no mercy could be found by the law of Moses, would, on a sincere repentance, be fully pardoned ; consequently by the terms of another covenant, and so well known, that their hopes of eternity rested upon it.

The sins of David were irremissible in the court of Israel, yet he knew forgiveness was to be had in that of heaven. On this ground, he confessed, supplicated for, and obtained absolution. "Against thee only have I sinned; deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." This must be only through the Messiah, for there "never was any name, given under heaven, whereby men could be saved, but that of Christ Jesus."

§ 9th. As law is the rule of life, and measure of action, it will be necessary, for a further confirmation of the subject before us, to consider some peculiarities essential to it.

Now, law in its primary notion implies a restraint of liberty, whereby a free agent is directed to act, or not to act, in such a manner, as before he was not obliged to ; and that under the pain of guilt and punishment.

Whence a noble author lays it down for an unquestionable truth, "that no actions are good or bad, honest or vile, till made so by some law ; it being certain, that antecedently to the imposition of any law, all actions must be esteemed indifferent." Puffendorff, L. N. 1. 2. c. 3. §. 4.

And Mr. Locke, "that what duty is, cannot be known, without a law." L. 2. c. 28. &c.

"And by referring their actions to the divine law, men judge whether they are duties or sins." *Ib.* §. 7.

For as God created man a free agent, no one had right or power to fetter his liberty, but the Lord of nature ; which he super-induced, by giving a revelation of what he required : nor could this have the force of a law, till signified to man after the manner of men ; that is, by discourse and communication ; by something that taught him, and obliged him. See *Duct. Dub.* L. 2. c. 1.

From these principles it will follow, that all duties were of external institution, not reasoned out, but absolutely positive, before

any act of obedience or sin could be performed; for law being the standard of actions, by that they must be deemed lawful or unlawful; and being also the measure of them, must contain every particular to be done or avoided. All which must be duly promulged, because law cannot bind, till declared, and known to be such.

This obtained from the beginning. God was the lawgiver, revelation the publisher; and thence arose such difference in the actions of men: "The divine law being the only measure of duty or sin." Locke, *Ib.* § 8.

§ 10th. From the same authority proceeds another essential of law, viz. its Obligation, without which it could not operate, but remain a dead letter, of none effect. This arises on two accounts, (1st.) from restraint of liberty, with respect to actions, which else were at our choice; and (2dly,) from annexing rewards or punishments, to the use or abuse of our freedom; which is the most rational obligation to determine the human will. These sanctions are the great enforcement of law, as drawing good or evil upon us, from our observance or breach of it, by the decree of the law-maker: "without them a law cannot be supposed; since it would be in vain for one intelligent being to set a rule to the actions of another, if he had it not in his power to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from his rule." Locke *L. 2. c. 28. § 6. &c.* See Appendix B.

For as actions cannot be said to be good or bad, where there is nothing to direct or determine the will, so none are subject to the sanctions of law, but the voluntary and chosen; and the being convinced of these sanctions, induces a bond or tie, to act, or not to act; as it subjects to that happiness or misery, which the law has annexed to the free choice of such or such actions.

Law, then, is the will of a rightful superior, commanding, or forbidding; who has a just authority over him that is commanded, wisdom to observe how his will is obeyed, and power to reward or punish accordingly. This is the prerogative of God alone, as creator he has supreme authority over the creature. He is lord of the soul, can take notice of its inward transactions, and most secret faults, and inflict punishment equal to transgression. Therefore he only can command and bind the conscience, because none other can judge of it, and whatever does not so oblige, can be neither religion, nor law.

Again; the sanctions of law must be commensurate to the whole of their beings who are subjected to them, or the obligation would be, but in part. If then man is intended for immortality; such must be the sanctions of the law he is bound by; and he the only law-giver who has authority to enact them; and power to reward with everlasting life, or punish with eternal damnation. These could not be set before us, but by revelation: therefore the revealed word, which will be the rule of judgment hereafter, must be at present; the only principle and measure of human actions.

For as every thing blameable, or commendable, must have some rule to try its goodness by, "hence the divine law is the only true touchstone, even of *moral rectitude*, since by comparing their actions to that, it is, that men judge of their most considerable *moral good, or evil*; that is, whether as duties or sins, they are likely to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the Almighty." Locke, *ib.* § 8.

§ 11th. If no authority but the supreme, can induce an obligation, the most sacred regard must be had, not to admit any bond on conscience, but what has a manifest and divine right to it:

This will convince us, that no judicature on earth has such enacting or compulsive power, but what is virtually, or formally, derived from the law of God—That human precepts may advise, or persuade, but cannot controul—That reason may gain assent, but not be a rule of obedience, till it has some unerring method of knowing what is reasonable or unreasonable; which it is plain the heathens never had, since it ever failed them in the particular applications of good and evil—That no single person can oblige another, having no right to it, or sovereign jurisdiction over him, in matters of duty and sin—That laws entered into, by a combination of men, in society, can be of force no longer than the agreement lasts, which every one may retire from at pleasure. Nor during such compact, can any force of human command invest such precepts with the power of obligation; they must have this before they can be received as rightful laws, and that only depends on their being the will of a rightful superior, that is, God*.

* This Plato allows, that God, and no mortal, is the first and original cause of all law. De Leg. 1.

Nor are moderns less inconsistent, or contradictory, in fixing this tie of obligation. There is the confused cry of a multitude, lo here, and lo there. But if one system be right, all the rest are wrong; and which is right, has not been hitherto agreed; which proves they have no unquestionable principles to go upon. Even their beloved subject, of drawing obligation from the eternal reason and fitness of things, lately imported from some unknown ideal region, is set forth in so many different lights, that it may serve to amuse, but not to instruct, or convince.

The scriptures constantly direct us, for the learning of truth and righteousness, to the will, the word, the law, and commandment of God, as being perfect, sure, what endures for ever, enlightens the eye, converts the soul, gives understanding to the simple, and is able to make all men wise unto salvation: but never sends us to proportions or congruities, for any such purpose; therefore whatever names * shall teach them, we are sure that doctrine is not from heaven. And the visible effect of it, whether intended or not, has been, to set the minds of men loose from any obligations of religion; which is a sure way, first to render it weak and contemptible, and then to banish it out of the world †: So that if natural religion was urged by some to oppose atheism; the concessions and arguments of their successors laid a sure foundation for, and are now the very citadel of infidelity: a strange chaos of divinity has been introduced; but, from their principles, Tindal neither has been, nor can be, answered.

* i. e. persons.

† The later and more candid writers on natural religion, abate somewhat of its rigour, in defining obedience to be doing that which God commands, because he did command it. Butler Analogy, pt. 1. c. 5. p. 99. Which therefore must be prior to obedience or obligation.—Others allow, “that the law of nature does not receive its obliging force, barely from the fitness or agreeableness of things as such, but from the will of God, who only has both right and power to oblige us; yet suppose them declarative of the will of God, and a means of promulging it to us.” Cockman Serm. Oxford, 1731. But where has God acquainted us, with an intent of declaring his will by such method? if no where, it is only a device of men. We are again told, “that this perfect law was obligatory upon man as soon as created, so as to behave himself according to the fitness of things, and the dignity of his nature.” They should also explain the possibility of this, without inspiration, that is, being revealed. Or were it possible; yet after the fall, the relations between God and man were totally changed; and if the terms of divine justice and mercy were free, man must be invincibly ignorant of them. Though for the sake of opposing revelation, it has, with equal folly and profaneness, been asserted, that reason could determine, what God could do, and was obliged to do.

If God created things after the counsel of his own pleasure, and rectitude of will (as to act otherwise would be a denial of himself) all their proportions, relations, and fitnesses, are of his appointment; creatures, which, of themselves, cannot oblige; nor have the force of law, till a delegation of divine power to them is undeniably manifested.

If their reasons were eternal, obligatory in themselves, antecedent to the commands of God, or any way independent of his will: then infinite freedom was restrained by them, and infinite power necessitated to act as it did, and not otherwise. Which must lead us up to some archetype or principle, external to, coeval with, and, indeed, superior to God, since he was obliged to command them, in the form, as they pre-existed.

Or, allowing God to be the first cause, it seems very unconsquential, that the relations of things should, when produced into being out of nothing, become of eternal necessity, absolute, unalterable, and independant of that cause, to which their very existence is owing.

To modest minds, it is sufficient to say with Scripture, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." good in itself, as made by him, from whom no evil can come; and fitted, by him, for its appointed station, in the visible or intellectual world; therefore must be agreeable to the purest reason; as God, who cannot lie, was the author of both. But it is the creative, revealed word, not nature, teaches that the fitness of things to virtue, leads to everlasting happiness.

And that God has an absolute right, over all their fitnesses, and relations, appears hence: that though no human power can dispense with the least of them; yet he has suspended the weightiest parts of the law, even justice and mercy; as in the case of Abraham, the Israelites in Egypt, and many others. He can enact or repeal, perpetuate, change, or abrogate his own laws at pleasure; and when he interposes they cease to oblige, therefore can have no obligation, but from him.

§ 12. Among other peculiarities of law, we must not omit the scriptural acceptance of it. And there we meet with none universally binding, but the divine law, as a revealed distribution of the divine mind; the authority, extent, and obligation of which are summed up in this short sentence, "fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man," all that is ne-

cessary to attain the utmost perfection of his being. But the command must be given, before it can be kept; nor can there be sin or duty, but from a voluntary omission or performance of what that enjoins.

In this the Scriptures are every where express. "That we had not known sin but by the law." Rom. vii. 7. For, "where there is no law, there is no transgression." Ib. iv. 5. Consequently nothing good or evil, so as to be matter of reward or punishment, but by some law; for as much as "sin without the law is dead." Ib. vii. 8. Has not the nature of it, which consists in guilt, and subjection to the legal penalty. Because, "sin is not imputed, where there is no law," (Ib. v. 23.) so as to condemn to death. But as "the sting of death," what makes it so embittering and dreadful, is sin; so "the strength of sin is the law;" (1 Cor. xv. 56.) without which it could not hurt, or bring guilt and death upon us: but where the law subsists, its condemning power is in full force.

So it was from the beginning. "If thou do well," says the Almighty to Cain, (Gen. iv. 7) "shalt thou not be accepted?" "and if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door," or punishment ready to be executed.

Place matters in what light we will, to make man the inventor, and author of law, will be found contrary to reason, and experience, as well as Scripture. To *reason*, because it has ever failed; has no power to reward or punish; and the lawgiver who binds, must be greater than he that is bound. To *experience*, as that shews what little advancements the wisest ages made, in the knowledge of God, and true religion. Their solemnest worship was abominable, their allowed morals most infamous, without any distinction of good and evil, but what custom made. Nor in all the volumes of antiquity, is a complete table of duties and sins, or a perfect rule of action, founded on just principles, and deduced by proper mediums, to be met with.

§ 13th. A great variety of arguments, supported by our ablest reasoners, have been offered: And if it shall in any measure appear from them, that religion entered the world at the creation; and that no law can be a rule of action, or oblige, but that of God, the inference sought for will be true; that no state, or religion, could be prior to revelation; and as none were subsequent thereto, but what might, and did, receive benefit therefrom; no

place, or use, can be found, for a state, law, or religion of nature; being altogether incompatible with an antecedently given revelation.

Consequently, all that has been, or can be said, in favour of them, amounts to no more than this; that men found out, what God had made known before. Or if it be argued, that reason could have discovered these things, without the aid of revelation; it is begging the question, incapable of proof, and a vain presumption, in ascribing to the human faculties a power which they never exercised, nor from any judgment to be formed of them, were able to do.

Nor does it carry the least probability of truth; since the wiser heathens always ascribed religion to the gods, and acknowledged the necessity of a light from them. And every age is a demonstration, that the further men dispersed from the patriarchal seats, where revelation was never extinguished, and came the nearer to an uninstructed state, which is properly that of nature, the deeper they sunk in ignorance and brutality.

But this matter may be referred to a short issue. Such great and glorious things have been spoken by learned men, of this blessed state; when reason was a Gospel, and nature a sufficient guide to final happiness; when men had perfect knowledge, untainted innocence, right notions of God, knew his voice, and were so intimate, that one might almost say, they had a personal acquaintance with him. Now if there be any thing more than a dream in all this, let them vouchsafe to tell, but likewise prove, when and where, this charming scene was exhibited; whether in Egypt or Greece, in Hudson's Bay, or the mountains of the moon; and dispute is at an end.

If they cannot shew one tittle of this; not a single fact, among the many advanced, that has the least truth or reality in it; they must pardon others, for not joining in their fairy dance, the amusement of luxuriant fancies, a phantom raised up to exercise the wit of men, and exalt their own understandings above measure. For what contradictions or absurdities can be greater, than an eternally existing religion and law, for an eternally non existing state? the whole is alike visionary, and never subsisted (out of Paradise) but in the human imagination.

§ 14. But the strongest plea for natural religion is still behind. A right knowledge of God is, on all hands, allowed to be the

foundation of religion ; it is therefore assumed as a postulatam, that men, by the use of their faculties, might, and that the Heathens did, discover the true God, without the help of revelation ; whence it is inferred, that they who had just apprehensions of the divine attributes, could not be ignorant of a service proper, and agreeable thereto,

But this position, the very corner stone of Deism, may not only be dissented from ; but must be denied, as absolutely false. Because Scripture tells us, “ that faith is the evidence of things not “ seen ;” the only assurance of the certainty or reality of what is spiritual, invisible, and future, even the divine existence as well as attributes. This is so plainly the Apostle’s intent, Heb. xi. 6. that Dr. Clarke acknowledges it. “ What these things are, says he, which being not seen by sense, nor yet manifest by faith, the Apostle here declares : “ they are, the being of God, and the rewards of the life to come.” Serm. 1. p. 1. Both are invisible, and equally restrained to the same method of knowledge : if future rewards are not knowable but by revelation, neither is the divine existence.

The only question before us, is, whether we shall believe God or man? Men say, the Heathens did know God. Scripture the direct contrary, that “ the Gentiles knew not God,” that “ the “ world by wisdom,” or any disquisitions of the human mind, “ knew not God,” were “ strangers to, without hope,” and ἀθεοί, absolute Atheists, “ without God in the world,” “ ignorant of him, but afterwards knew God.” For “ all the “ gods of the nations were idols.” Creatures, “ which are not “ gods.” “ Things that are not.” Empty, vain, and profit not ; for “ an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other “ God but one *,” even “ the Lord that made the heavens ;” whom the Heathens neither know, nor had heard of.

As to the knowledge of God, every thing, on the side of revelation, is plain and consistent. “ Faith is the assent to a proposition, not made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer, as coming from God,” Locke, L. 4. c. 18. § 2. To believe on the divine testimony is a religious act, which has no objects but matter of revelation. This full assurance (ἐλπίστος πίστις, Heb. x. 22.) makes every article certain and

* 1 Thess. iv. 5. 1 Cor. i. 21. Eph. ii. 12. Gal. iv. 9. Ps. xcvi. 5.
Deut. xxxii. 16. Est. xiv. 13. 1 Cor. viii. 4.

infallible; no proposition having more irresistible evidence, than, whatever God affirms, is true.

On the side of reason every thing is dark and impenetrable. By what sure and certain steps, an uninstructed mind, which never heard of God, could rise up to a clear comprehension of an infinite and uncreated nature. The fable of the giants rearing mountain upon mountain to invade heaven, has something more specious in it, than the fable of a groveling silly Automathes, crawling up to light inaccessible.

Where shall the savage (for all are such by nature) set out? he is without the name of what he is to seek; yet names are the only marks of essence, to which he could affix any discoverable properties: and names cannot be given to things, of which the mind has no apprehension. When, or where then, could he begin to search for he knew not what?

To say a finite mind should enquire after infinity, a term, which it could neither conceive or understand, is a contradiction. Yet every thing in God is infinite, and what is immense is measurable only by itself. So that till he could judge of infinity by his narrow reason, or measure eternity by a span of time, he would be as far off the end of his enquiry, as when he began. Can those enlightened Christians who attribute so much to Heathens, comprehend eternity without succession, or immensity without extension? Do they not confess, "there is hardly any thing more inconceivable, than how a thing should be of itself, as God is?" Tillotson, V. I. Sermon. 48, p. 573. Yet this is but the first step in the ladder which must reach to heaven:

Mr. Locke tells us, "that the first being is infinitely more remote, in the real existence of his nature, from the highest and perfectest of all created beings, than the greatest man, nay purest seraphim, is from the most contemptible piece of matter; and consequently must infinitely exceed, what our narrow understandings can conceive of him." L. 3. c. 6. § 11. Now what ideas can a man have of what he has not the least conception? yet "knowledge (with him) goes not beyond our ideas—and our perception of their agreement or disagreement with the reality of things—many of which are beyond our reach." If then there can be no certainty of our ideas agreeing with archetypes infinitely beyond our comprehension, there can be no knowledge. So where all the essential and distinguishing properties of a substance are incomprehensible, such must be its existence also. Every

thing here is equally boundless, and without limits: and the infinite existence of an all-perfect nature, cannot be known but by its infinite perfections.

Such is the task men impose on their speechless, untaught, ignorant animal: to search for, what he must know, if he knew any thing, was altogether remote, and unsearchable. But others, who have thoroughly studied the subject, teach us, that all things of an incorporeal nature, lie beyond the reach of human knowledge, as we have no grounds from sense or reason to lead us to them. That whatever belongs to God, the adorable perfection of his attributes, the works of his power, the proceedings of his providence, and the like, are objects of none of our faculties: they lie far beyond the sphere of natural light, or inquisition of reason.

§ 15th. As the question before us, whether the Heathens did, by the use of reason, come to a knowledge of the true God, is of great importance, let us examine it in a different manner. The first thing in all controversies, is to determine, and agree in, the true meaning of words. And if we understand the name, God, in a scriptural or Christian sense, as a nature, or essence, supreme, invisible, incorporeal, ineffable, incomprehensible, &c. without beginning or end, the first cause, and creator of all things; the Heathens surely never had a notion of him.

Again. As all things are distinguished by their essential properties, to know a thing must be to have right apprehensions of those qualities, and attributes, which constitute that identity, by which a thing is what it is, and not any thing else. But the peculiarity of the godhead, or what makes it different from all other beings, is infinite perfection: so that to ascribe the least shadow of defect to him, at once destroys the clearest and most essential notion we can have of God.

If the Heathens believed him such, they certainly knew him; if they did not, they as certainly were ignorant of him. It is an old and true maxim, *Deum negaret, auferendo quod Dei est*, Tertul: adv. Marc. c. 3, to withdraw what belongs to God, is a denial of him, by making him something different from, inconsistent with, and contradictory to his real nature.

To conceive him what he is not, is to put an idol in his place. And it deserves an harder name than shall be here given, to say,

they knew the true God who represented him under characters, or attributes, which he has not, nor can have; or if he had them, could not be what he is.

Truth is but one; and he who makes the least alteration therein, by endeavouring to add to, or diminish from it, turns it into falshood. As God therefore is but one single act, the same eternal, uncompounded principle, without any dissimilar, or heterogeneous parts, and what we call the excellencies of his nature, are the nature itself: to misrepresent, or defalcate these, is to change it into a lie.

They who judge by this scriptural rule, must allow, that the Heathens, with respect to divine knowledge, sat "in a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Job x. 22. Their ignorance, falshoods, and blasphemies of the Supreme Being, need not be mentioned. Every one knows them; their defenders are ashamed, and have no apology to offer. What a scale of diminution is Dr. Clarke forced to use? "Men," said he, "without the assistance of revelation, did not attain to a right knowledge of God, in any considerable degree—some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of God—and in those enquiries, wherein they professed them to be most wise, they became fools." Rom. i. 22.

To what lengths will a bad cause carry learned men? They knew God but not *rightly*, then *falsely*; nor in any considerable degree, therefore not at all, for he is not discoverable by scraps, or halves; they knew, what their own ratiocination forced them to unknow, so far, as to disbelieve his very existence. And after professedly laying out the whole effort of the human mind, to attain some wisdom, in these sublimer subjects, they remained errant fools; not knowing what, or why, they worshipped. The upshot is, that if they knew God, to know, and not to know, must be the same thing, at the same time, and in the same person.

Nor will it mend the matter, to glean a few detached sentences, scattered up and down the ancient writings, how charming soever they may be, and then cry out, behold the strength of reason! but let a philosopher be named, even the divine Plato, who rightly judged, "that nothing should be attributed to God, that is not consentaneous to his nature." Repub. 2. p. 379. A. And if a thousand glaring absurdities, falshoods, contradictions, and inconsistencies, are not to be found in him, (which Cicero saw,

and lamented in his *Deus ille noster*) the cause shall be given up. If they occur in every page, the few bright sayings are no more than flashes of lightning, which may amaze, but not direct the benighted traveller : and only prove, that they had *heard* of subjects which they did not *understand*; and *repeated* a name, the true import of which they never *knew*.

It has also been ever acknowledged by Heathens, as well as Christians, that men may as well have no God, as to entertain base, unworthy conceptions of him. (See APPENDIX, C.) Yet by the renour of the Gentile catholick faith, he was looked on as a material, impotent, and polluted being.

The Scriptures account for all this ; that “ the nations had forgot God.” Ps. ix. 7. After which they never recovered the knowledge of him, “ nor called upon his name.” Ps. lxxix. 6. “ And when they knew not God, they did service to them, which by nature are not gods.” Gal. iv. 8. For “ they sacrificed to devils, not to God.” Deut. xxxii. 17.—1 Cor. x. 23. So that except belief and disbelief, knowledge and ignorance, truth and falshood, have changed places, the Heathens were utter strangers to the true Jehovah.

§ 16th. If we further consider the real strength of reason, and that great proficiency the ancient sages made in subjects, where the mind had some sure footing : what could prevent their making equal advancements, with certainty and truth, in divine knowledge, but that it is placed out of the depth of reason ; and that, “ touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out ?” Job. xxxvii. 23. Had it been possible, some imperious mind, during the long reign of philosophy, with its force of genius, natural and acquired endowments, and unwearied diligence, in the pursuit of it, would have framed some rational consistent scheme ; but none did.

Soerates had doubts concerning his country gods, but there he stopped ; in life he constantly attended their altars and temples, and in death worshipped them. Porphyry, “ from the whole of their religion, greatly feared, that their opinion of the Deity was quite contrary to what it really is.” Epist. ad Aneb. and shall we judge of paganism from him, or any modern ?

Again. Had they discovered the existence of God with certainty, they must, by the same procedure and connexion of proofs, have clearly perceived, that indefectible holiness, unerring

justice, infinite power, and every other perfection of essence, were inseparable from that existence. Then would the schools have argued in a similar manner, concerning the first being; without those fundamental differences, and eternal clashings; which made Cicero look on their disputes, as the dreams of madmen, rather than the judgments of philosophers.

Here there is no medium. We must either say, the human mind was unequal to the task: or, there was not a man honest enough to declare truths of the greatest importance to the world; but maliciously debased them, with foul and intolerable errors. Nor do they any honour to reason, who affirm she could do, what she never did; but it is justice to suppose her author never intended her for such purposes.

In human philosophy vast improvements are daily made; in the divine so little, that, since paradise was lost, no wisdom under the sun, has been able to add one iota, in the discovery of another attribute, or a clearer manifestation of those that were revealed, before reason could enter on the enquiry.

Nothing but conviction made Grotius say, "that to affirm any thing more, for certain, than what is delivered in Holy Scripture, either concerning the nature of God, or his will, by the sole guidance of human reason, is most unsafe, and fallible." *De Ver. Christ. Relig. L. 3. c. 12.*

§ 17th. There is still another argument to be considered, which natural religion most frequently appeals to, and seems to lay the greatest stress upon, viz. that the human faculties, by contemplating the works, may, and did, ascend to a knowledge of the workman. But this will, on examination, appear to be false and groundless as the rest, upon several accounts.

1st. The Scriptures never urge the works, to prove the being of God, but his eternal power and godhead, when revealed: then, and not before, "the heavens declare the glory of God;" and as Job speaks in the like sense, "ask now the beasts and they shall tell thee. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is seen." Job xii. 7.—Wisdom xiii. 5.

2dly, They plainly teach us, "that through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear." Heb. xi. 3. Creation, or producing something out of

nothing ; and innumerable beings, at a word, let it be so, starting out of non-entity, is no object of reason, but of faith. Here again all things are infinite ; and he who can clearly discover the contrivances of omniscience, may also perform the works of omnipotence. The very *hearing* of creation, is by the word of God.

3dly, The creatures were so far from leading to the Creator, that they were the cause of the first and most universal idolatry, when the world forsook and denied him. The name of God remained, with an opinion of some superior excellencies belonging to it; but the nature so totally forgot, that they arbitrarily annexed the name to the most glorious of visible objects, the universe, the sun, moon, and stars, which they accordingly fell down to, and worshipped; as gods.

They also deified the worst and wickedest of men ; but such as, from their achievements, they looked upon above the common rank of mortals ; the founders of kingdoms and cities, the inventors of arts and sciences, or the benefactors of mankind. The former continued to be the gods of philosophers, the latter of the commonality, during the life of paganism.

4thly, The very act of creation was looked upon as a thing so incredible and impossible, that it became the common opinion of all naturalists, that “ nothing can be made out of nothing*.” They therefore universally held matter to be a self-existing principle, co-eternal with God, and that its pre-existence was absolutely necessary to the production of things. Accordingly, Jehovah is, through the Old Testament, distinguished from false gods, as the maker of heaven and earth. And in the New Testament the Apostles begin their instruction of the Gentiles (not the Jews, who ever believed it) with that distinguishing attribute, they were entirely ignorant of, the living God who “ made heaven and earth, and all things therein †.”

* Aristot. Phys. 1, 4, 8.

† Anaxagoras held two eternal principles. Plato made his master's hypothesis worse, by adding a third. And Aristotle denied both, as having no reason to support them, and held the world to be eternal. Plato indeed (in his *Timæus*) calls God *δημιουργὸς πάντων τῶν θεῶν*, the framer and father of the lesser gods. But professes to have received it from ancient original tradition; and does not infer more, than that will warrant; at the same time steadily holding the eternity of matter and motion. Galen says, the opinion of Moses is quite different from mine, and Plato's, and all other Greeks who have wrote judiciously concerning nature. De part. in corp. hum. us. Ora. 9: c. 13. Simplicius, if he [Moses] thinks this to have been the first genera-

Omnipotence is an essential attribute of God. That power which reacheth to the utmost possibility of things, or, to whatever is not contrary to the divine nature, or does not imply a contradiction, which are no objects of power. This every Heathen denied to God. And all his ways and workmanship being unsearchable by man; he, for the manifestation of his own glory, revealed, and recorded by Moses, what only could be known to himself; the act, and order of creation.

It must then incontestibly follow, that no contemplation of the visible works, could lead those up to an invisible Creator, who believed a creation utterly impossible. Consequently, no relations or fitness of things could be a sufficient direction to the world, whilst ignorant of the nearest relation man can stand in to God, that of a creature to its Creator. And the foundation being thus apparently false, the whole pompous fabric built thereon, falls to the ground.

Nor were any fitnesses deducible from an agent who could not work without matter prepared to his hand, as wanting the perfections of a Supreme Being. And for moderns to infer them, from an act of infinite liberty and freedom, is, at best, an unwarrantable presumption. In the will and works of God every thing is impenetrable, further than he declares them; except therefore a man can comprehend all the ways which infinite wisdom hath of knowing things, and infinite power of doing things; how they were at first contrived, and by what means they now fulfil their destined agency; it will be ever impossible to deduce from them, a complete and undoubted rule of life.

Nor is it needful; God no where requires it, but has given another method of instruction. And could he deceive us in his word, he might also by his works, and man be subjected to perpetual delusion. The word and works are equally from him, as Creator and Law-giver: he established the course of things, and order of nature, but gave them not as a law to us. That is, to

tion, and beginning of time, it is a fabulous narration. Com. in Arist. Phys. L. 8. p. 268. Celsus derides the Mosaic history of the creation, as an incredible unphilosophical tale. Orig. cont. Cels. L. 4. p. 186. And Longinus, § 7. though he admired the grandeur wherewith Moses described the creation, looked upon it as a high strain of rhetorick, rather than a proper expression of that incomprehensible efficacy, which attends the divine will and decree. See APPENDIX D.

love him and keep his commandments, which are to be learned from his revealed word, not from the Bible of the world.

Mr. Locke, however, has the easy method, by a Pythagorean *ipse dixit*, of sliding over and solving matters which do not square with his Essay. The real essence of all things is, with him, far beyond our discovery or apprehension. L. 3. c. 6. § 9. Yet men have faculties to discover enough in the creatures to lead them to a knowledge of their Creator and their duty. L. 2. c. 23. § 12. L. 4. c. 12. § 11. That is, men know nothing really of matter the nearest to them; yet by that knowledge of nothing, know enough to discover a spiritual infinite, removed at the most inconceivable distance from them. They are not fitted for the least, yet are equal to the greatest task.

Mr. Locke indeed says this, but never attempts to prove it, except by scriptural arguments, which he uses, when professedly treating of this subject, L. 4. c. 10, &c. and he certainly included himself under his general rule, that moderns no ways excel the ancients in strength of reasoning; and whatever they say better is from a light the others never had. His bare assertion, therefore, can be looked upon as no more than what he elsewhere calls, "a confused notion, taken up to serve an hypothesis."

"And he certainly was as good a philosopher, who teaches, that surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen, know him that is; neither by considering the works, did they acknowledge the work-master." Wisd. xiii. 1.

§ 18th. So much has been said of the knowledge of God, which is the foundation of all religion, that little need be added on other subjects. A RESURRECTION, and the soul's IMMORTALITY, are the ground-work of all reasonings about futurity; and if not clearly discoverable, natural law is of little worth; it being an eternity to come, that makes religion so awful, and its motives so powerful.

As to a RESURRECTION, it was ever looked upon as an article incredible and impossible. The Stoics and Epicureans had never heard of so strange a doctrine, and despised it. (Acts xvii.) Pliny says, God cannot do all things, neither recal the dead, nor make mortal creatures immortal. N. H. L. 2. c. 7. And Celsus brands it, as the hope of worms, a filthy, abominable, impossible thing,

what God neither will, nor can do. Orig. cont. Cels. L. 5. p. 240.

Of the soul's IMMORTALITY, it may suffice to say, that as the divine power and goodness are the only stability of things, by which all created beings are brought into existence; and enjoy a continuance of it: so, whether they shall be annihilated, or have a permanence through all eternity, depends wholly on the will of God; and what he will do cannot be learned but from revelation; no principle being clearer than this, that whatever had a beginning, may also have an end; that it shall not, must rest on the divine testimony.

For had the soul a natural immortality, the origin of life in itself, it could never cease to be, but would be God. If its immortality be only positive, it is a special act of the Creator; and what infinite liberty did, or would do, could only be declared by him.

But as all things beyond the grave are, to nature, a land of darkness, the best arguments it could offer were false and inconclusive. There never was agreement, because no certainty. Some doubted, others denied, not one had an assurance of it. Whence all their disputes ended in nothing but words, and empty contentions. All they could offer was, says Grotius, *conjecturæ, incertæ, vagæ, fragiles*, doubtful, vague, and weak conjectures.

Immortality was an hearsay, which pleased some, convinced none. If the soul survives, well! if not, no evil will ensue; was the utmost limits of human understandings. (See APPENDIX E.)

Of a FUTURE STATE, whose extremes of happiness or misery so closely bind the soul of man, their opinions were equally wavering and contradictory; some broken remains of antiquity carried down the river of time, sadly defaced, and ridiculously disguised; but what none could rectify. Yet, says Bp. Wilkins, Nat. R. L. 1. c. 11. "what bears, and wolves, and devils, would men prove to one another, without the belief of rewards and punishments in another life?" true; but were they not looked upon as children's tales, without influence or regard? These things are only knowable by revelation; to that are owing humanity and civility, as well as reason and religion. And because the voice of it was but little heard, or not at all; by so many nations, ever was the true cause, and still is, of their being wolves and devils.

Yet these articles were steadily believed by the Hebrews. Martha knew her brother would rise again in the resurrection at the last day. It was the hope of Israel, and the promise of God made unto the fathers. A future state of rewards and punishments was also so clearly revealed in the writings of Moses and the prophets, that he who hearkened not to them would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead, and attested the reality of it.

The same will hold good of every other article. Some light shone forth in darkness, amidst the few who travelled to glean up knowledge. But all primæval truths became so miserably altered that little more than their names remained. And of these, natural religion shall have the full benefit, in the manner and measure they were taught by the wisest schools.

As to their MORALS, they were of necessity loose and inconsistent, having no rule to try them by, or principles to deduce them from. It is agreed, that there can be no morality, except there be a God, whose nature is the first and great exemplar of it. Therefore, what men's notions of God are, such will be their morals; if one be gross, imperfect, and false; so must be the other. The propositions are convertible; tell us your gods, and we will tell what your morals are: tell us your morals, and we will tell what are your gods. All were alike bad, their gods were vanities, their worship accursed, and their morals the shame of reason, and the stain of nature.

§ 19th. But it will be asked, how then can we account for what knowledge, be it more or less, the Gentiles had, and whence was it derived? the answer is, from TRADITION; as may appear by several considerations.

1st. Nature being the same in all, take revelation away, and mankind must have been under an universal light, or total darkness; there being little difference, but what instruction makes. This ceased, as men dispersed, and reports became daily more uncertain; like the faint twilight on the horizon, when the sun is set, which gives some notices, but very imperfect ones, of distant objects: where that was quite extinguished, it was darkness, as the shadow of death. This our excellent Hooker confirms (Ec. Pol. L. 1. § 13.) "To judge what hazard truth is in, when it passeth through the hands of report, we need only con-

sider the *little* of things divine, which the Heathens have in such sort received." For truth never changes, but for the worse.

2dly, The very obscurity of things is a proof of such conveyance: as truth must be before error, which is only a corruption of it. Original falshood is a contradiction, and impossible. An instance of this we have in the name of God (to which some supremacy and worship will be annexed) his proper appellation Jehovah remained, but turned into a lie, and called Jove; not denoting any truly divine being, but matter, or man, or what every one pleased; for the world had 300 Jupiter gods, that Euripides might well say, who Jupiter is, I know nothing, but what fame reports. Menalip. v. 2.

The same rule will hold good in all cases: if there had not been once a true religion, we could never have heard of bad ones: every mode of Gentile worship was some divine institution perverted. This manifests the certainty of a revelation, and the weakness of reason, which was so far from discovering new truths, that it could not retain the old ones it had learned. And that these were no congenite notions, appears from its *never recovering them, when once lost*, but by fresh instruction.

3dly, According to the difference of purity, wherewith original traditions were conveyed to different people, arose the strict observance of particular duties in some places, which, in others, were totally neglected. So far conscience went, and *thoughts accused, or excused them*; but no farther than informed. Where ignorance was invincible, there could be no law to oblige, nor rule to act by; therefore *God winked at it*, passed it by, without charging it to their condemnation. But had they sufficient light by nature, and that were the appointed means, to know their duty and their God; there could have been no room for such mercy: or, the condition of Heathens was far better than that of Jews or Christians.

4thly, If the world had various doctrines and speculations about things, confessedly above the sphere of reason; as of lesser gods or angels, the origin of the universe, the primæval state, the corruption of man, the entrance of sin, mediators, atonement, and the like: it has the strictest force of demonstration, that they were once revealed; and the deformed manner in which the Heathens taught them, was a debasement of their pristine beauty.

The vast length of time also through, which many traditions have been conveyed, and do still subsist, amongst distant and even

barbarous nations, of which instances may be given amongst every known people under heaven; abundantly confirms the observation already made, that there could be no age which did not receive benefit from revelation.

Nor can we here omit a noble testimony of the patriarchal seats being where Moses placed them, from which fountains all the streams of knowledge flowed: that as Greece derived its sacred doctrines and traditions from the east, the Chinese do it from the west. Du Halde, tom. 3, p. 313.

5thly. There can be no point in philosophy more undeniable than this; that whatever knowledge men discover by a rational procedure, they are able to prove or shew by what train of reasoning they made out the deduction. Yet the Heathens never could do this, in any divine article. Some argued better than others, but not a single tenet was ever demonstrated from right principles, by proper mediums; so that it could not be their own invention. Aristotle therefore rejected his master's sublimer doctrines, because no rational account could be given of them.

Plato, however, is very ingenuous, professing he did not come at them by his own discovery, but from hearsay; and frankly tells where and from whom he received each article; "yet verily believed them to be true." *Gorgias*, p. 524. A. He justly calls them Syrian and Phœnician fables, or traditions, but ineffable, as containing mysteries above his comprehension; and derives the very existence of the gods from their own information. *Philebus*, p. 16. C. His example alone sufficiently demonstrates, that no man can go further in supernatural truths than he has a borrowed light to direct him: and such was the confession of every philosopher.

6thly. This method of conveyance is acknowledged by their most learned defenders, as the only one they had of coming at these speculations. Grotius calls the survivance of souls a most ancient tradition, derived from our first parents. Whence else, says he, should it come to almost all civilized nations? *De Ver. Christ. Relig.* 1. § 32.—Bishop Cumberland. The tradition of one God, greater than the rest, the soul's immortality, &c. were derived from the common fountain of mankind, the sons of Noah. *Orig. Antiquiss.* p. 451.—Bp. Burnet, from the universal belief of a God, infers, that either there is somewhat in the nature of man that, by a secret sort of instinct, dictates this to him, —or, that this belief has passed down from the first man to all

his posterity, in Art. 1.—Dr. Whitby. That the weak and imperfect knowledge the Heathens had of a future judgment, was preserved to them by tradition. Attributes, V. 2. p. 69, 93.—Dr. Clarke, of the soul's immortality; that it was received from a tradition so ancient and so universal, as cannot be conceived to owe its original either to chance, or to vain imagination, or to any other cause, than to the author of nature himself. Boyle, Lect. pt. 2. Prop. 4. And such is the language of almost every writer who treats of this subject.

§ 20th. This enquiry into the means of attaining knowledge, grounded on the true plan of nature, the authority of scripture, the experience of all ages, and the confession of the wisest Heathens and Christians; shews that, in whatever light we place things, an infant mind wants nurture, as well as an infant body; which nothing but instruction, and that originally from God, can supply. Our adversaries are therefore again called upon to shew when, where, and by whom, a right belief of the true God, and the duties owing to him, were clearly and universally maintained prior to, and without any benefit from revelation: or with it, out of the pale of jewry.

If the world ever was without the name of God, to which some sense of religion must be annexed, let them prove it; or tell us, how men could be said to find out, what they learned from their fathers? and if the wiser Heathens disclaimed their coming at such knowledge, by any use of their faculties; whether to affirm what they deny of themselves, be not arrogance and falshood.

Or were an universal rule of acting imprinted on nature, interwoven with our very beings, every one must be as conscious of it, as of his own existence; and as soon forget to see, or hear, or walk, as these self-evident truths congenite with, spontaneously springing up, and cut deep, in the heart: such objections as these are slid over, never answered. Let one city, or one man, be produced as an example, of knowing or believing these things.

And if the *few* adulterated their choicest doctrines with monstrous absurdities; to depend on reason for a guide, affords little honour to God, or comfort to man; of what use is a law in the mind, which no one perceived, and every one corrupted.* Let it also be reconciled, how mankind should be able to discover the

perfect will of God; yet, when discovered, totally unable to observe it in faith or practice.

But if we take instruction along with us, it is a teacher that will direct us through all the obscurity and maze of things, solve every difficulty, lead up truth to the fountain head, and explain the mighty difference in wisdom, between ages and nations; that as marble in the block is capable of any form, so is the human mind deformed, or beautiful, according to the skill of him who models and polishes it.

What good cause then can be assigned for reason being thus set up against revelation, except the pride of man, who would not willingly be a debtor to any but himself? The revealed Word of God is a complete law of all things required of him to *believe*, or *do*, towards the perfection of his nature. And whether his commands relate to practice or speculation, the authority of all is equally from him; but with this difference, that to the former he demands the obedience of our will; to the latter, only the assent of our understanding.

Yet, though his precepts are most excellent, agreeable to the purest dictates of reason, and the highest expectations of the soul, men will not ascribe the glory of them to God, but themselves; and by thus taking off their obligation, become their own lords and masters.

On the same account they reject all mysteries, because there can be no secret counsel in God, which they are not able fully to understand and comprehend; though the only faith required of us, is to believe the reality of some things, upon the credit of a divine testimony; not the manner how they do exist, which is neither revealed, nor required of us to know. And if men are not so wise as God, infidelity, in these cases, must be owing to great pride or perverseness. Though one short rule may serve to direct us in considering both the word and works of God; that it matters not what we (ignorant of the internal frame of all things) can conceive or do, but what infinite power can do, and what infinite truth declares he has done, can, or will do. This no one denies of God, but that he may be a God to himself. Or for man to complain that he cannot do, or know more, than his present faculties are able, is to complain of God that he did not make him an angel, or some different being, with larger capacities from what he is.

And for what is it men would exchange the word of God? for a law, which has no certainty or obligation, no existence, no mark of truth or religion in it; of so little use to the great purposes of man, that it never did afford an universal rule to direct him in the way to happiness? What then could the fruits of it be, but to live in ignorance, and lie down in misery?

Even to read Dr. Clarke's Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, seems sufficient to make a thinking Christian renounce and abjure it. V. 2. Prop. 6. "That the best of the philosophers had no knowledge of the order and method of God's governing the world—That their natural understanding was as unqualified to find out and apprehend the most obvious necessary truths, as the eyes of bats to behold the light of the sun—even the nature and attributes of God himself—As to the *manner* in which God would be worshipped, they are entirely and unavoidably ignorant—In all important doctrines, as the soul's immortality, and certainty of a future state, they were very doubtful, and uncertain—Nor were ever able fully to explain, or prove, the necessary indispensable obligations of morality—They perpetually disagreed, and contradicted one another concerning the chief good, and final happiness of man—and several other very necessary truths, not possible to be discovered, with any certainty, by the bare light of nature—Or, were it possible, it is certain, in *fact*, the wisest philosophers of old never did it—So that there was plainly wanting some extraordinary and supernatural assistance, which was above the reach of bare reason and philosophy to procure—And the very heathens were persuaded, that the great rules of human life must receive their authority from heaven—For revelation has a greater and more influence upon the lives and actions of men, than the reasonings of all the philosophers."

Of what necessity or use, then, is a religion that thus vanishes in a mist? Nor is it only a deceiver, in pretending to things it never did, but a felon, in robbing revelation of invaluable truths, and then claiming them as its own. "For almost all the things that are said wisely and truly by modern Deists (and pray what is Dr. Clarke?) are plainly borrowed from that revelation which they refuse to embrace, and without which, they never could have been able to have said the same things—It is *one thing* to see that these rules of life, when plainly laid before us, are perfectly agreeable to reason, and *another thing*, to find out these rules merely by the light of reason." Dr. Clarke, *ib.* Prop. 7.

So Mr. Locke, and others "It sould seem," says he, "by the little that has been hitherto done, that it is too hard a thing for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon its true foundation—it' ever failed men, in this its great and proper business—And if the Christian philosophers have so much out-donè the Heathen, yet we may observe, that the first knowledge of the truths they have added, was owing to revelation." With much more to the same purpose. Reason. of Christ. p. 268, &c.

Here, then, let us stop and consider if there are but two ways of coming at whatever deserved the name of wisdom or understanding, either by reason or revelation: one, a glimmering, false, deceitful taper, that always bewildered its followers in ignorance and error; the other a clear, perfect, and refulgent light, ever shining forth unto perfect day, by which no one ever walked, and was deceived. What difficulty can there be in our choice?

Who would change his Bible (by which a villager knows more than all the schools of Athens or Rome) for a metaphysical cobweb, an inconsistent jargon of unmeaning terms, which can render a man neither wiser nor better? or leave truths of his great concerns to tedious intricate deductions, which few or none are able to judge of, when he has in his hands so short and sure a method of coming at them, as the infallible rule of his almighty law-giver?

If redemption and faith, repentance and salvation, are articles of our creed, and ne parts of natural religion, what should we study, but the words of eternal life; or whither go for learning but to that school, where such divine subjects are taught as none but God could declare, and confirmed by such unquestionable evidences as prophecies and miracles, which none but God could bring? nor is the time yet come, or ever will, when his revealed word shall not be as necessary for the direction of man, as his providence to govern the world.

To conclude. From the foregoing enquiry, we may perceive the error of several opinions, advanced by great names amongst us, in support of natural religion. One is, that God never gave a law to mankind before the days of Moses; and thence, in all their discourses, confound the Patriarchal and Mosaical law together, though most essentially different in their origin, obligation, universality, and continuance. Another, equally false and danger-

ous, is, that a general declaration of God's will was never made to the world, before the preaching of the Gospel.

But of all the assertions inculcated by moderns, the most detestable is, that the only intent of revealed religion, was to revive and improve the natural notions we have of God: and that revelation cannot subsist, without presupposing a natural religion. Whereas it appears undeniably, that revelation was from the beginning; and that without it, there could not have been any duty, law, or religion in the world. Let us then "hold fast that form of sound words, and beware lest any man spoil us, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

For as the whole scheme of creation and redemption was laid in the mind eternal, so since the fall, there has been but one covenant, the everlasting Gospel of good tidings; but one mediator, whose priesthood is unchangeable; one faith, by which we can be saved; one hope of eternal life, and threat of endless death, to every one that cometh into the world.

Here then (but as I ought, in so solemn a case, from a thorough and long conviction, nor from any other motive, would urge others to do the same) I fix the rule of my faith, the law of my being, and the hopes of my salvation, that religion entered the world by revelation; and that, because no other system can give certainty, authority, and obligation to it, can neither satisfy the judgment, nor bind the conscience. And if this principle be true, without any thing here advanced in support of it, but what is warranted by scripture, dispute is at an end. Whatever the Atheist or Deist object; whatever foundation of stubble, or straw, others would lay, in reason or nature, can be no more than cavil or supposition.

In the Bible alone, is man's present duty, and final end propounded. And thence it appears that a perfect rule, and fixed measure of duty, binding at all times and places, without standing in need of any addition or alteration, was given at the beginning, and shall endure through all generations; who are but one family, in one spirit, one Saviour, one God and Father of all.

To whom, &c.

A P P E N D I X.

AS some points might seem to want further explanation, and others to be confirmed by the opinion of the most competent judges, it was thought proper to add them by way of appendix.

A. p. 15. It is undoubted a task of utmost danger to dissent from Mr. Locke's essay; yet whilst it is the standard of mens reasonings, and judging of things, if any fundamental errors be contained therein, they must unavoidably lead into mistakes of the most pernicious nature. To examine matters of such consequence, is every one's duty and interest; with which view, I beseech every serious enquirer after truth to consider, whether our great author, whilst he rooted up innate ideas, did not, by his own hypothesis, open a gap to far greater evils. Whether, indeed, his whole plan be not contradictory, false, uncertain, and inconsistent with religion. At least, I shall offer a few observations, why it appears to me in that light.

1st. The grand principle on which his fabrick rests, is, "that ideas of sensation and reflection are the original of all knowledge." The rule is general; no exception can be made: for "all those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all the great extent wherein the mind wanders in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond these ideas." L. 2. c. 1. § 24.

To pass over ideas of reflection which Bishop Brown (in his limits of the human understanding) has proved undeniably to be a contradiction in terms: it must be here observed, that the frequent retractions from his main principle every where to be met with, were not intended to invalidate it, nor are so taken by his followers. The general maxim is inviolable, "that we want knowledge of all sorts, where we want ideas."

Now if the mind be acquainted with numberless truths, the knowledge of which (by Mr. Locke's own confession, and an impossibility arising from the nature of things) it did not come

at, by ideas of sensation and reflection, there can want no farther proof of the Essay's being laid in falshood and contradiction.

Our philosopher then tells us in general, that "in the works of God there are more and more beautiful beings whereof we have no ideas, than there are whereof we have ideas. 2d. Reply to the Bishop of Worcester, p. 537. Dublin Edit. Of which beings whereof we have no ideas, a man is capable of knowing their existence to be real and true, "because he is capable of having it revealed to him by God," *ib.* which surely, as he seems immediately after to apprehend, is inconsistent with "his own way of certainty."

He again thus distinguishes things; "by reason God communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of our natural faculties—Revelation is natural reason enlarged, by a new set of discoveries, communicated by God immediately." L. 4. c. 19. § 4. Consequently, there are truths and knowledge of quite a different kind and origin from those supposed to be attainable from ideas of sensation and reflection.

"For there are propositions above reason." *Ib.* c. 17. § 23.—
"Many things wherein we have very imperfect notions, or none at all, and other things, of whose past, present, or future existence, by the natural use of our faculties, we have no knowledge at all: these as being beyond the discovery of our natural faculties, and above reason, are, when revealed, the proper matter of faith." *Ib.* c. 18. § 7.—
"The existence of spirits is not knowable, but by revelation." *Ib.* c. 11. § 12.—
"And concerning the existence of several other things, we must content ourselves with the evidence of faith." *Ib.*—
"For in all supernatural truths, the evidence of reason fails." 2d. Rep. to Bp. of W. p. 597.—
"We receive the Christian religion from revelation, whereby God himself affords light and knowledge immediately to us, and we see the truth of what he says, in his unerring veracity." *Ib.* c. 7. § 11.—
"For revelation, having the testimony of God, is certainty beyond doubt, evidence beyond exception; and our assent to it, or faith, has as much certainty as our knowledge itself." *Ib.* c. 16. § 14.

Is it not then clear as the sun, that though some truths are laid within our reach, "of which the mind can determine and judge, by the use of its natural faculties, from naturally acquired ideas;"

Ib. c. 18. § 9. yet there are numberless others of far greater dignity and importance, which lie beyond the sphere of reason; as all supernatural, spiritual, and invisible beings, or objects, which are discoveries immediately from God. For "whatever proposition is revealed, of whose truth our mind, by its natural faculties and notions; cannot judge, that is purely matter of faith, and above reason." Ib. Then revelation is the principle of truth, and ground of assent.

So that here is a vast stock of sublime knowledge, all indeed deserving that name, which does not take its rise from, or has the least connection with, ideas of sensation and reflection. Nay, the point contended for undeniably follows Mr. Locke's own positions, that whenever religion entered the world, it must have been by revelation, or *communicated by God immediately*; which is incompatible with ideas of sensation.

2dly. There arises from the very nature of things, an impossibility of their being, in general, subject to Mr. Locke's system of ideal knowledge. If we consider the utmost extent of the mind, all things conceivable by it may be reduced under two classes, visible and invisible, material and immaterial. There is no medium; nor can think or judge of them, without some mark or representation before it; and in proportion as these are clear or confused, such will be its perception of them.

Of the former species it has an exact image, conformable to the existence of things, which may be properly called an Idea. This is what he says; "of a figure we clearly see, and a sound we distinctly hear, we have ideas by sensation or reflexion." Let. to Bp. of W. p. 70.

But what has this to do with the other class of things, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard?" yet by his own rule we have a knowledge of? Here we have no true picture, or representation in the mind, but only some faint notices, received by instruction and analogy, or comparing things unknown with those that are known. We see them but "as through a glass darkly," 1. Cor. xiii: 12. *ἐν ἀνίμῳ*, obscurely, at a distance; so as to have a glimpse of them by likeness or similitude, not a clear vision of the objects themselves. And these, in distinction to ideas, may be called Notions, as "being quite removed from sense." L. 3. c. 1. § 5. For they are conveyed by language to the intellect, where words are the substitutions or signs of them.

Nor are things themselves more essentially different than their

conveyances to, or representations in the mind for objects of thought. Language cannot convey original direct ideas of sense, nor ideas of sense intellectual notions. So neither can we have an idea of spirit, or a notion of what we distinctly see. And it is as possible for the mind to create an object of sense, as a notion of invisibilities without information.

On which accounts Mr. Locke's grand principle is false, contrary to, and inconsistent with, the nature and essential difference of things.

3dly. This hypothesis is uncertain, and of the most pernicious consequence to all religious truths.

It appears that the mind cannot contemplate things, in their absence, but by some representations of them; nor otherwise, than as they are true or false. For "as truth in its proper import, signifies nothing but the joining or separating of signs, as the things signified by them, do agree or disagree with one another." L. 4. c. 5. § 2. it must follow, that the placing signs to represent things which they cannot possibly signify, will produce great uncertainty and error, both in philosophy and divinity, by confounding all real truths as they exist in nature. Thus, by placing the same mark for visibles and invisibles, reduces both classes into that, whereof the mark is a proper substitute, and the mind must think and reason upon them accordingly.

"For knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of any of our ideas." L. 4. c. 1. § 2. And if things be diverse, so must the memorials of them; or the mind, in thinking, could not distinguish one from the other. For where there is no difference, things will appear the same; it cannot join or separate signs, consequently neither attain truth or knowledge.

Now, as the greatest "abuse of words is the setting them in the place of things, which they do, or can by no means signify," L. 2. c. 10. § 17. it may justly be apprehended, that from our great author's using the term Idea in so equivocal and undetermined a manner, "as the idea of God, the idea of an infinite supreme being," L. 4. c. 3. § 18, and the like, as well as of the nearest and most contemptible objects, greater mischiefs have arisen than from all the writings of the professed enemies to religion. He constantly asserts "an idea to be whatever is the object of the understanding, when a man thinks." L. 4. c. 1. § 8.—"For

we cannot reason without thinking, or think without immediate objects of the mind in thinking, that is, without ideas." 2d Reply to B. of W. 473, 536, 537.—“ So that where we have no ideas, our reasoning stops, and we are at an end of our reckoning.” L. 4. c. 17. § 9.

Not only of our reason, but of our religion also, and every thing that is invisible and divine, whereof we can have no ideas.

Again. The recapitulation of all is, “ Wherever we are sure our ideas agree with the reality of things, there is certain real knowledge.” L. 4. c. 4. § ib. So on the contrary, without such assurance, we can have no certainty. Whence it follows, that as we cannot be sure that our most exalted notions do agree with the archetypes of spiritual heavenly objects, we can have no real certain knowledge of them.

The consequences which have followed this loose method of teaching the doctrine of ideas, are many, and fatal.—Hence, younger minds have contracted such prejudices against religious truths, as are not without great difficulty to be removed—Upon this, our latter infidels have grounded all their cavils, or pretended reasonings, against revelation—It is so fundamental a point in heresy, that some, in the preface to their little essays, have reminded us of it, that we might never lose sight of this first self-evident principle, that ideas of sensation and reflection are the original of all knowledge.

It is from the reduction of things essentially different to the same class, and making ideas the universal representatives of them, that every free-thinker insolently assumes the liberty of affirming and denying the same thing of all things, however opposite, in the same literal manner as if they were of the same kind; and confidently demands the same proof for every branch of knowledge, whether human or divine, though it be as absurd and contradictory as to make one sense, judge of objects peculiar to another; the ear of colours, or the eye of sounds. And because they have no direct sensible ideas of supernatural truths, cannot comprehend, therefore will not believe them.

This sophism is the corner-stone of anti-revelationists under all their serpentine marks and disguises, to require the evidence of sense for what is not cognisable by sense. They cannot endure the name of mystery, or that there should be any thing so

transcendent in the divine nature and existence, as paternity, filiation, and the like; or any decree or effect in the secret counsel of God for the redemption of mankind, that is not to be conceived in an human manner by plain direct ideas, as observed among the creatures. Such is the pride of infidelity, that rather than give up its all-comprehension, it will blend heaven and earth together; destroy the first principles of whatever deserves the name of truth or knowledge, and shamefully confound things essentially different, which God and nature have removed at an infinite distance.

B. p. 29. This point cannot be allowed by the teachers of eternal reasons and fitnesses, but is maintained as an undeniable truth by almost every other great writer on the subject. The noble author already mentioned, shews at large, that nothing can bind the observation of a command, but the supreme authority. Puffendorff, l. 2. c. 3. § 20—That we cannot conceive any fitness or unfitness in actions prior to such law. L. 1. c. 2. § 6—That to establish an eternal rule of morality, without respect to the divine injunction, seems to be joining with God some coeval extrinsical principle, which he was obliged to follow in assigning the forms and essences of things—All obligation proceeding from the command of a superior, moral good and evil consist in the respect they bear to that; so that setting aside all law, the motions and actions of men are, in reality, perfectly indifferent—And till reason is informed with the knowledge of such law, it is as impossible for it to discover any morality in human actions, as for a man born blind to make a judgment of the distinction of colours—Therefore such sentences, that the precepts of the natural law are of eternal truth, and the like, must be so limited and restrained, that the eternity reach no further than the imposition or institution of God Almighty, and the origin of human kind. *Ib.*

To the same purpose amongst many foreign authors, Osiander asks, if there were any such thing as moral good or evil, before all law, how could there be any obligation to make such difference in our actions, since all obligation proceeds from the command of a superior? *Not. in Grot. de I. B. & P. p. 60.*

And our own Bishop Taylor demonstrates at large (in *Duct. Dub.*) that nature cannot make a law, nothing being just or unjust, till some divine law intervenes: nor are the duties of natural law bound upon us any other way, than by the command of God—The laws of nature are not to be looked for by the rules of reason, which has always been uncertain as the dreams of

disturbed fancies—It has infinitely differed in every place and age—And the wisest of men have believed the worst of crimes to be innocent, or without any natural dishonesty; with numberless other arguments. L. 2. c. 1. Even Hobbes maintains that the laws of nature have no further the force of laws, than as they are promulged in holy scripture by the word of God, and not as they are certain conclusions apprehended by reason, concerning the doing or the omitting of things. De cive. l. 3. § ult.

C. This some cannot digest, as bearing too hard against the Gentile world; but is not the less true on that account. I shall mention, and that with great brevity, a few, out of many noble attestations to it, both from ancients and moderns, which deserve to be read at large.

Plato refers all divine knowledge to divine instruction; and rightly says, that the Gods gave us understanding in order to learn, and what we learn is by their information—Nor can any man teach religion, except God go before, and shew him the way. Epinom. 988, 989. Plutarch, that by thinking rightly of the Gods, we avoid a superstition, bad as atheism—Better to have no gods, than what many represent them. Is. & Osir. p. 355. D. And whoever would attain a knowledge of the gods, must beg of them to grant it. Ib. init.

Cicero, that the ancients were his teachers in religion—which they did not learn of themselves, but were taught by others. De Harusp. Respons. That even they, who confessed the being of the gods, run into such a variety and difference of opinions, that it is a trouble even to enumerate them. N. D. L. 1. n. 1. That they might rather be called the dreams of madmen, than the judgments of philosophers. Ib. n. 16. And where opinions are so various and opposite, it is possible that all may be false, impossible that more than one should be true. Ib. n. 2. That the nature of the gods always appeared to him very obscure. Ib. n. 7. So that he ever doubted, never could determine what was true. Seneca. That to conceive unworthily of God, is to deny him. Epist. 114.

The elder Christians say, that opinions unbecoming the divine nature and essence, are little better than blasphemy. Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 721. B. And Lactantius, reflecting on the monstrous tenets of the Greeks, thought it better to have no religion, than so impious an one; not to believe any gods, rather than imagine them such as they were generally reported to be.

Moderns say the same. That a man may have such unworthy notions of a Deity, that it would in some respect be as good, nay much better, to be without a God, than such an one as he may frame. Wilkins, N. R. l. 1. c. 8. Better to have no opinion of God, than such an one as is unworthy of him. Ld. Bacon's Essays.

There is, indeed, a kind of palliation offered by Lord Herbert, Bishop Burnet, and others, who acknowledge the monstrous errors ascribed to God by the Heathens. But, say they, let him be set forth with proper attributes, and they would be so far from not believing such a Deity, that the instant he was propounded, they would receive him. True; and does not this establish what is here contended for, that man by nature could not come at due apprehensions of the divine attributes, but he had reason given him to understand, and believe supernatural truths, when propounded to him, which could not be done but by revelation.

D. They who would satisfy themselves of the philosophic opinions concerning the first principles of things, out of which they were fashioned, need only consult Cicero de N. D. Plutarch. de placit. & Laertius. And they will find but one universally agreed in, viz. that they looked upon God as a workman, who when he builds, does not make the materials, but uses those already made. The great Cicero taught that matter had a pre-existing state. In Timæo. And, that to say it was either produced from, or could be reduced to nothing, was an absurdity never affirmed by any philosopher who studied nature. De Divinat. l. 2—And the grave Plutarch, that nothing can be made out of nothing, or what has no existence. De Anim. Procreat. p. 1014—The Pythagoreans, Stoics, Platonists, and Peripateticks, held the pre-existence of matter; and after christianity, the two latter returned to profess their old system, and the world's eternity, the better to oppose the Gospel. Nor was there ever a philosopher who acknowledged a God, and did not at the same time believe there was an eternal uncreated being, viz. matter, which owed its existence only to its own nature, and had no dependance on any other for its essence, attributes, or properties.

E. The issue of this may be left to the conduct of Socrates, and the judgment of Cicero. Natural religion constantly appeals to, and lays great stress on, the case of Socrates. The appearance, indeed, is solemn; we see the best of men unshaken on the brink of eternity, and discoursing on that momentous point with the

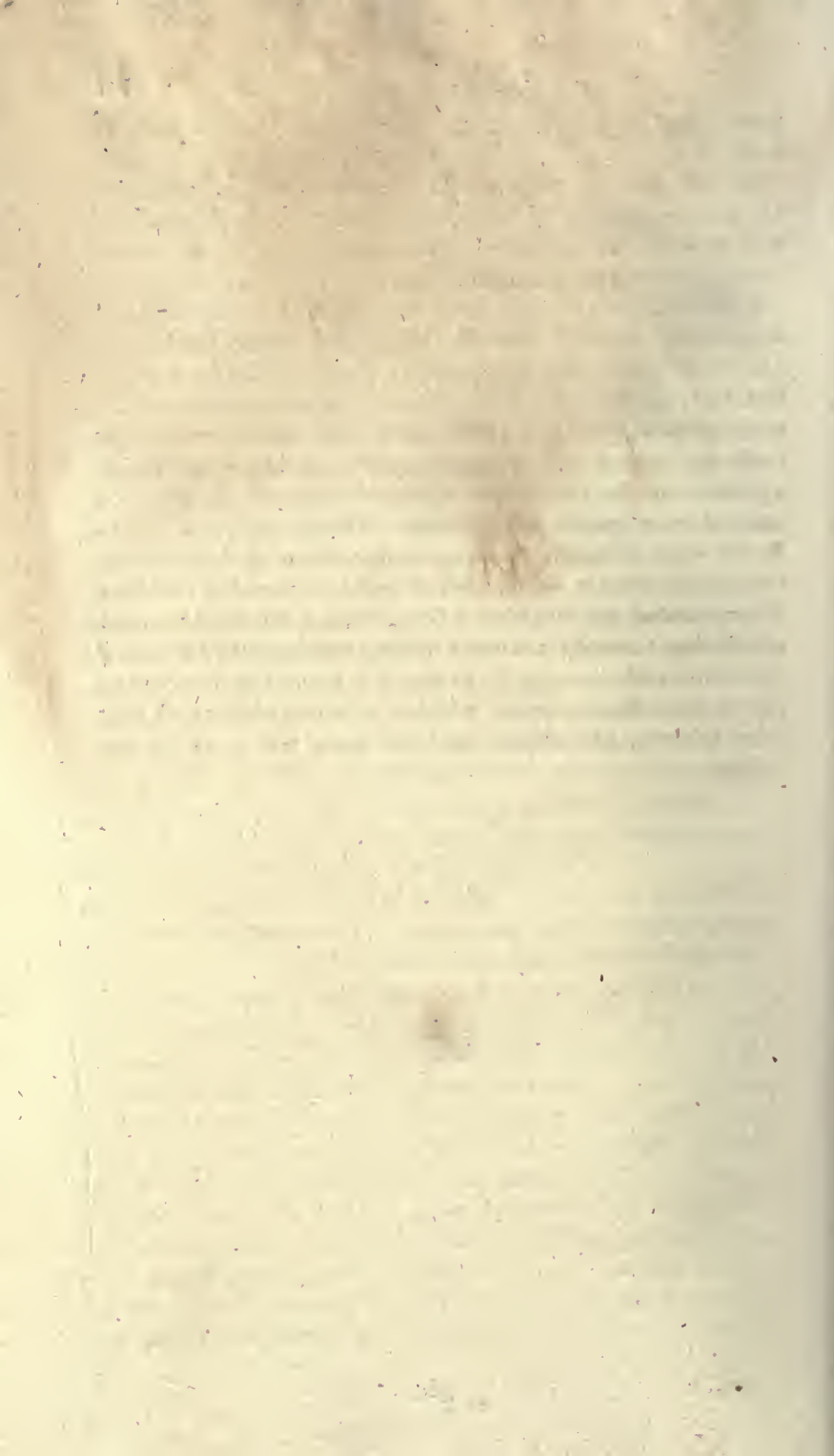
utmost composure. But what was the consequence? his chosen disciples, who revered the preacher, looked on his thesis as a mere paradox, a doctrine rejected by all mankind. Nor was their master convinced of its truth; his doubts were great, his certainty so little, that he was afraid of leading both himself, and them, into error; and concluded his famous apology with these remarkable words:—"It is now time that I go hence to die, and you to live; but which is best, no mortal, I think, can tell."—It is also generally asserted, that Socrates knew the true God. Of this we cannot judge better, than from his behaviour on this last and most important event. Yet the true God is not so much as mentioned, nor any of his incommunicable attributes, under which a dying sinner would seek for refuge, his power, wisdom, or goodness; not a word of contrition or repentance, no supplicating for pardon, no hopes or even a wish for mercy, at his hands who judgeth the earth. Yet he had great compunction of mind, and scruple of conscience; not about his future condition, but for not obeying the God of dreams: therefore during his long imprisonment, makes a serious preparation for death, by composing verses to the dæmon of Delphos, and translating Æsop's fables. And in the last gasp, calls back, as it were, his departing soul, to order the discharge of a vow, by as stupid an act of idolatry as the most ignorant savage was ever guilty of.

Cicero affirms, that a pure mind, thinking, intelligent, and free from body, was altogether inconceivable. N. D. L. n. 10. Which, of all the philosophic opinions is true; let some God see to it: which most likely, is a question hard to be determined. Tusc. Q. L. 1. n. 11. It was what most argued vehemently against; and every learned man despised it, Ib. n. 22, 31. He had often read and heard of it. De consolat. p. 563. and had the *magna spes*, great hopes, but no assurance. Tusc. Q. L. 1. n. 41. When he carried philosophy to its utmost stretch, in an ecstasick rapture on the soul's permanence after death, "Oh glorious day," &c. Yet it ends in this; "if after all, I am mistaken in my belief of the soul's immortality, I am pleased with my error." De Senect. ult. The dream may be enchanting, but vanishes as soon as one wakes. "I have," says he, "perused Plato with the greatest diligence and exactness, over and over again: but know not how it is, whilst I read him, I am convinced; when I lay the book aside, and begin to consider by myself, of the soul's

immortality, all the conviction instantly ceases." Tusc. Q. L. 1. n. 11.

Dr. Clarke says, "this cannot be observed without some pity and concern of mind." Boyle Lect. Disc. 2. A great deal one may believe; for, in reality, it destroys all that he, or others, have spoken of natural religion.

Cicero, indeed, thought common consent to be the strongest argument in favour of the soul's immortality. Tusc. Q. L. 1. n. 14. Yet immediately after affirms, "that Pherecydes was the first man, as evidently appears from his writings, who said the souls of men were immortal." Ib. n. 16. Which surely can imply no more than that, in his opinion, it was a doctrine so agreeable to the reason and wishes of mankind, as must be assented to, whenever duly proposed. But will not prove that to be the voice of nature, which so many millions of rational creatures in the western world, never thought, or heard of for above fifteen hundred years together. Some of our greatest moderns also tell us, that it must be a natural notion, because *men hit upon it by chance, and agreed in it*: so that their rational faculties had no part in the noble discovery; which is a contradiction to all their other schemes, and as great an insult upon reason, as on true religion.



THE RELIGION OF NATURE,
WHICH IS NOW SET UP IN OPPOSITION TO THE
WORD OF GOD,
PROVED TO BE A MERE IDOL FROM THE VERY TEXT THAT
HAS BEEN SO OFTEN PRODUCED IN ITS FAVOUR,

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED IN YORK-MINSTER, JULY 8, 1744;
AT THE ASSIZES HOLDEN FOR THE COUNTY OF YORK,

Before the Honourable

THOMAS BURNET, ESQ.

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF HIS COURT OF COMMON PLEAS;

AND

CHARLES CLARK, ESQ.

ONE OF THE BARONS OF HIS MAJESTY'S COURT OF EXCHEQUER:

Published at the Request of the HIGH-SHERIFF, and the
GENTLEMEN of the GRAND-JURY.

BY CHARLES WILLATS, M. A.,

RECTOR OF PLUMTREE, IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

TO THE WORSHIPFUL

GODFREY COPLEY, ESQ.

HIGH SHERIFF OF THE COUNTY OF YORK,

AND THE

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRAND JURY.

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	Lionel Copley, Esq.

GENTLEMEN,

I NOW present you with the following Sermon, which at your Request I have ventured to publish: I had designed to have annexed to it a full Explication of another famous Text that is often cited in Favour of the Law of Nature. This has caused some little Alteration in the Form of my Discourse, as well as delayed the Publication of it.

BUT

BUT that Argument soon grew under my Hands to a Size that I thought somewhat disproportionate, and too large for an Appendix. It may, perhaps, if it shall be deemed necessary, be shortly printed in a distinct Discourse by itself.

I AM not so vain as to expect that others will now read this Sermon with the same Candour that you were pleased to receive it from the Pulpit. I know there are many truly great and justly admired Names, as well as some strong Prejudices against the Doctrine contained in it. But I am so fully convinced not only of the Truth, but of the Importance too, of what I have advanced, that if the Reader will only bring along with him the Spirit of the Christian, I shall not much fear the Severity of the Judge. I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient, and

Most humble Servant,

CHARLES WILLATS;

ROM. ii. 14, 15.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves: which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts.

THE Religion of Nature has been for many years the favourite idol of this Protestant kingdom. The Scriptures were formerly esteemed the sole rule of faith, and the only standard of divine truth. But the word of God must now, it seems give the way and precedency to this great and superior law of nature; which has of late been cried up with as much noise and clamour, and perhaps with as little sense too, as the great goddess Diana was by the Ephesians, when the "greater part" of those, who joined in the cry, "knew not wherefore they were come together."

To this supreme law the characters of divinity have been expressly ascribed.

It is, they say, eternal and unchangeable, antecedent to the will of God, and independent on it.—It is so exceeding clear in its principles, that it is the only true light "that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world."—It is so full and perfect in its rules, that God himself can neither add to it, nor diminish ought from it.—It is so universal in its extent, that it comprehends the whole race of mankind; all kings must fall down before it, and all nations upon earth do it service.—It is so authoritative in its dictates, that God as well as man, the Creator as well as the creature, is obliged to conform to it.

From this single source and fountain of light, we are told, that all the right notions of the Deity are originally derived, and all the great lines of morality drawn; insomuch that unless these are first known and believed, "Revelation itself can signify nothing to us:" for Natural Religion is the sole foundation of all that is instituted and revealed.

Now all these assertions seem to me very shocking positions, not only incapable of being reconciled to the Word of God, but of fatal tendency to strengthen the hands of those that oppose it. And in fact we find, that the keenest arrows, that have been shot against Christianity have been drawn from this quiver. What some very good men have made the only foundation of our faith; other very bad men have, perhaps with less inconsistency, made the principal foundation of their infidelity. And if our divines will still tell them, that unless all the great things contained in their Law of Nature are first known and believed, the Revelation of God himself can signify nothing; we cannot, I think, much wonder, that they should now at last tell our divines, that where all these great things are first known and believed, Revelation can signify little.

For the very end of Revelation is, I presume, to discover to us, by a supernatural light from heaven, those truths which we are naturally ignorant of; and not the truths which we naturally know; and these, with submission, I must believe are truths of the highest, and not of the least importance; to the glory of God; and the salvation of man.

But to get, if possible, to the bottom of this subject; I would fain learn from the present advocates of the Religion of Nature, where we may find the *autographa* of this boasted law, and the original text upon which such surprising comments have been written. This is a fair question, and which I think ought to be as fairly answered.

But these great men must know that it is only sending us upon a fool's errand, to bid us consult the great digest and pandect of nature, and the everlasting tables of right reason, which, they say, are much more ancient, and by some expressions it should seem, more sacred too, than the very tables on which God himself wrote the commandments he delivered to Moses. "For ask now of the days that are past, since the day that God created man upon the earth: and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other," Who, of all the sons of Adam, ever saw these everlasting tables, or ever heard of any library upon earth, where this digest of nature was to be found? And what God has never once mentioned nor recommended to our notice, and no man to this day can tell where we may find, I shall look upon as a mere idol, which some moderns have set up in their hearts, but which,

in the strictest sense of St. Paul's words, is "nothing in the world."

But I seem perhaps to forget my text, of which I expect now to be reminded, and of those strong expressions contained in it, where St. Paul, as these learned men will needs have it, does expressly affirm, that the Gentiles themselves, who had not the law of Moses, nor any Revelation from God, did yet, by the mere strength and light of nature, do the great things contained in the law: and though they had not the law, yet they were a sufficient law unto themselves, and shewed the grand work of the law written on their hearts; which plainly proves that there is a Law of Nature antecedent to the revealed Will of God, and independent on it, that is written in the hearts of all mankind.

Now I am fully convinced, that the modern geographer may as soon find the very spot of ground where Paradise stood, before the earth was broken down and dissolved at the deluge; and the apostate Jew as soon discover that unknown region of the world, where the ten tribes of Israel lie concealed to this day; as either the Infidel or the Christian can find those Gentiles, that did by the mere strength of nature the great things contained in the Law of Moses. For it is plain from almost every page in the Bible, that after the days of Moses, till the coming of Christ, there was not a single nation under heaven, the Jews only excepted, that either knew or worshipped the true God. And how it was possible for those, who knew not God, to do the great things contained in the Law of God, it will require more philosophy, I believe, than even these great men are masters of, to shew. And that St. Paul himself never once dreamed of this boasted Law of Nature, that is said to be written in men's hearts; and that those learned men, who have urged this passage as a strong proof of it, did only dream so, is what I shall now endeavour to prove. From which account we shall, I hope, at last find the true meaning of this mis-translated and mistaken passage, and be able perhaps to discover the rise of those unhappy doctrines that have been built upon it.

The great Mr. Locke, who has wrote a very elaborate comment upon this epistle, justly admired St. Paul as a very close reasoner, who always argued to the point he was upon; and as a great master of address too, who always took care to give as little offence as possible to his countrymen the Jews.

But if now, according to the common interpretation, the Gentiles in my text were those Gentiles who continued under that apostasy and revolt from God, which the first Gentiles in the preceding chapter began, it will pose the acutest reasoner upon earth to reconcile the amiable character St. Paul gives of the one, with the very black and hideous colours in which he describes the other.

Read over that large catalogue of stupendous sins, to which the first Gentiles were abandoned by God upon their apostasy from him; and then compare them; and try if it is possible, that those Gentiles who persevered in this apostasy from the true God, could deserve, or be in any sense capable of that character which St. Paul gives them in the text before us. The former description presents us with a ghastly scene of the greatest enormities that man can commit; the latter, if I do not greatly mistake, expresses in few words the height of piety and goodness.—But let us take this passage in another light. The Apostle had said in the very verse before my text, that not “the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” But if you now ask, who these doers of the law are? St. Paul, that great master of address, who is so very tender of shocking his countrymen the Jews, is plainly made to answer in the very next words, that they are the Gentiles who continue in open apostasy from God. These, it seems, are the doers of the law which shall be justified; for though they have not the law, yet they do the things contained in the law, and that by the sole strength of nature too, and so completely also, that they are a law unto themselves; “which shew the work,” or great end, “of the law written on their hearts.”—This is in truth a doctrine so shocking, not to Jews only, but, I should hope, to all Christians too, that the very naming of it may shew that St. Paul’s words have certainly been mistaken. And yet it is exceeding plain, that in the verses following my text, the great Apostle proceeds in the very same chain of argument to shew, that the Jews were in truth only hearers, but not doers of the law; and that therefore their circumcision, in which they so much boasted, was made uncircumcision: whereas the Gentiles in my text, whom St. Paul describes in such beautiful colours, are the uncircumcision that keep the righteousness of the law, and which shall be therefore counted for circumcision. They are, as it is expressed in the next verse, the uncircumcision by nature, that, in the strongest word the

Apostle could use, “fulfils” the law; and therefore must condemn the Jew, “who by the letter and circumcision transgresseth the law. For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly,” and can plead only his carnal descent from Abraham; “neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is the Jew, who is one inwardly;” a true Israelite indeed, of the faith of their father Abraham: “and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.”—These, as St. Paul speaks in another place, “are the circumcision that worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” And such I will now presume are the Gentiles in my text.

For to bring this point to a short issue: St Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, sent to open their eyes, “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

Now these Gentiles in my text must be either those who were converted, or those who still “sat in darkness and the shadow of death,” under the dominion of the devil, “without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world.” If they were Gentiles by nature, who were now converted to Christ, the character St. Paul gives them in my text is consistent with every text in Scripture, which speaks of the first converts in as high terms; but if they were still under the power of Satan, you may as soon reconcile light and darkness, Christ and Belial together, as make the received interpretation of this passage consistent either with common sense, or the Word of God.

For what, I beseech you, are the things contained in the law? Is not the very first and greatest commandment of all, “Thou shalt have no other Gods but me?” Is not the second, “Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image—Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them?” Are not these two in a manner the sum and substance of the whole law, insisted on and inculcated over and over in every chapter of the Bible? And could the Gentiles after all, before they were converted and turned from idols to serve the living God who made heaven and earth, do the things contained in this law? It is a glaring and barefaced contradiction.

Moses tells us, that “whoever sacrificeth unto any gods, save unto Jehovah only, shall be utterly destroyed.” And were the Gentiles who, St. Paul says, “sacrificed unto devils, and not

“unto God,” the very same Gentiles who, the same Apostle tells us, “did the things contained in the law?” It is the height of absurdity, and absolutely impossible.

But here I suppose, by some great men we shall be told, that these laws were given to the Israelites only, and not to the Gentiles. I own it; I plead for it: the strength of my argument against their boasted Law of Nature, is from this irresistible, and the astonishing weakness of their plea from the words of my text demonstrable. “God had” indeed “shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel; but he had not dealt so with any other nation, neither had the heathen any knowledge of his laws.” No; it was, in Judah only that God himself was known, his name was great in Israel; whereas all the gods of the nations were idols: but Jehovah made the heavens.

But where then, in the mean time, was this boasted Law of Nature, or what was the light thereof, which during this long night of pagan darkness could not distinguish an idol from the living God, nor the creature from the Creator, who is blessed for ever? And shall we be still told, that Natural Religion is the sole foundation of that which is revealed? So that where the being and attributes of God, and other great points of morality, are not first known by the light of nature, revelation itself can signify nothing; and that it is indeed ridiculous in all respects to pretend to prove these things by Revelation? But how comes it to pass, I beseech you, with due reverence be it spoken, that an argument from the mouth of God shall be thought ridiculous, which in the mouth of a modern philosopher shall carry the force of demonstration? What! is not the Bible as good a book, and as sufficient too for the conviction of an Atheist, as Dr. Clarke’s book of the Being and Attributes of God? Or cannot this Almighty Being reveal himself to them that know him not, discover himself even to them that seek him not, and manifest himself to them that ask not after him?—What! was not Christ then in truth a “Light to lighten the Gentiles” who knew not God? Or did he not indeed send his Apostles to open the eyes of these blind Pagans, “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?”

And is it after all ridiculous, in all respects ridiculous, to pretend to prove these things from Revelation? And does Revelation

itself necessarily presuppose these things as first known, and always speak of them as presupposed, when the Scriptures not only suppose, but in the most express terms affirm them to be absolutely unknown to the whole Gentile world; and that there was not a single people upon earth besides the Jews, to whom the oracles of God were committed, that either knew or worshipped the true God? And is it now possible to conceive that St. Paul himself could affirm, that the Gentiles before their conversion, even while they knew not God, but did service to them who were by nature no gods, did at the same time do the things contained in the Law of God? That while they were thus given over to a reprobate mind, suffered to walk in their own ways, and to follow their own imaginations, they were yet a law unto themselves? and that the heathen, even when they had not the knowledge of God's laws, did yet shew the work of the law written in their hearts? In truth, I am quite ashamed to expose in this manner the nakedness of this interpretation; but I hope the importance of the subject will be my excuse.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles had converted many thousands of them to the faith of Christ; but in every epistle which he writes to confirm them in this faith, he never fails to remind them of the deplorable state they were in, before their conversion to it.—They were then without strength, the servants of sin, and enemies in their mind by wicked words; nay, they were even dead in sins, and by nature the children of wrath, even as others. And is it possible that they could at the same time do, and that by nature too, the things contained in the law?—He tells them, that before their conversion they lived as other Gentiles live, “in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence,” and all those sins, “for which the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience:” and were they at that time also a sufficient law unto themselves? He reminds them, that “in times past they walked as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; because of the blindness of their hearts; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” And can the wildest imagination believe that the same Apostle could affirm, that they did at that time “shew the work of the law written in their hearts?” What a load of absurdities does this single interpretation of my

text throw upon the great Apostle St. Paul? and yet how greedily has it been caught at by some learned men to advance a favourite notion, that I verily think is inconsistent with, and plainly condemned in almost every page of Scripture. I could easily heap argument upon argument, and still heighten this accumulative evidence in proof of my assertion. For so far was St. Paul from once thinking of this boasted Law of Nature, so far from once speaking one single word in its favour, so far from asserting that the invisible things of God could ever be discovered by the bare light of it, that he not only affirms over and over, that “the Gentiles knew not God;” but moreover proves too, that they never could have known him, unless God in his infinite mercy had first sent his Apostles to preach and reveal him unto them. This, in St. Paul’s judgment, was the only means by which God could ever be found of them that sought him not, or be made manifest to them that asked not after him; and I am quite amazed, that good Christians should differ so widely from him. For pray what is the meaning of that remarkable phrase St. Paul uses to the Galatians, whom he had himself converted? “Then when ye knew not God, ye did service to them who are by nature no gods: but now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.”—This expression seems to me with great strength and beauty to imply, that unless God had first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name, and had been pleased to have first owned them for his servants, they had never known or owned him for their God. And from this very argument St. Paul at once justifies himself to the Jews, and pleads the necessity of his mission to the Gentiles. God had often spoken of a new covenant that he would make in the latter days, when there should be no longer difference between Jew and Gentile; but, in the words of the prophet Joel, “Whoever should call upon the name of Jehovah should be saved.” Upon which the Apostle immediately breaks out in these remarkable words: “How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We have here, I think, as plain a demonstration as any in Euclid, that as the Gentile world knew not God, believed not in him, and had not so much as heard of him; so they

could never have called upon his name for salvation, unless God had first sent his Apostles to reveal him, and to preach the Gospel of peace, even the glad tidings of salvation unto them. This single passage of the great Apostle of the Gentiles carries such conviction along with it, and strikes with such a force, as is sufficient to tear up at once this imaginary Law of Nature by the roots. It shews in the strongest point of light the absolute necessity of Revelation, and that Christ was, in the highest sense of the words, "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" and at the same time proves, that the Religion of Nature, to which the characters of divinity are now ascribed, and which is by some set up in direct opposition to the Gospel, is in truth as gross a fiction, and as mere an idol, as any of the Gods which the heathens themselves worshipped.

And had the words in my text been rightly pointed in the original, only by placing the comma after *φύσει* instead of before it, and then literally translated, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law by nature, do the things contained in the law;" the words had been strong and beautiful, and the sense of them plain and obvious: there had been no room for mistaking St. Paul's meaning, nor the least shadow of an argument to be drawn from them in favour of the Law of Nature. It had then evidently appeared, that the Gentiles in my text, "which do the things contained in the Law," were the uncircumcision that keeps the righteousness of the law;" the uncircumcision by nature that fulfils the law; and that therefore shall be counted for circumcision, even the true "circumcision of the heart, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

The very learned Grotius*, who was willing enough to build something like a law of nature upon this text, yet plainly saw, and was so ingenuous as to own, that the words might fairly be translated as I have rendered them; but the context plainly shews, and the sense of the whole Scripture proves, that they not only fairly *may*, but necessarily *ought* to be so translated.

The Jews, indeed, were born under the law, and so they had the law by nature, that is, from their very birth, which the Gentiles had not; and it should be remembered, that "we who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles," are the very words of our great Apostle himself in his speech to St. Peter;

* Lib. I. Cap. 1. § 16. Par. 6. De Jur. Bell. & Pac.

and yet I verily think it would be the height of absurdity to affirm of the best Jews that ever lived, that they "did by nature the things contained in the Law." But to affirm this of the Gentiles, if there be degrees of impossibility, is surely the very first-born of contradictions, and that whether they were converted to Christ or not: for if they were converts to the faith of Christ, it was certainly by Grace, and not by Nature, that they "did the things contained in the Law;" but if they were not converts, but still "servants to sin, and under the power of Satan," it was absolutely impossible they should do them at all, or ever "shew the work of the Law written on their hearts."

So that, rack and torture this sentence as long as you please, in the present position of the words, as they now stand in our translation, the wit of man can never extract common sense out of it, or force it to speak any thing which will not be a flat contradiction to the whole Scripture.

But to do justice to my argument, and throw in still more light upon this greatly-mistaken passage, let us now enquire into the original design of the law, that so we may better understand what "the work of the law" is, and what "the things contained in it" mean, in the text before us.

The Jews, we know, greatly boasted of their law: this was not their fault; they might justly have so boasted. For what nation under heaven was there so great, that had statutes and judgments so righteous, as all that law which God, by the hands of his servant Moses, had set before them? But their great misfortune, and their great fault too, was, that they had now by their vain traditions quite mistaken the original design of their law; which, as St. Paul tells them, was "their school-master to bring them to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and who had been promised as an universal blessing to the whole world long before their law was given by Moses. For the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, "in thee and thy seed shall all nations be blessed."

Now this original covenant, as St. Paul finely argues, which "was before confirmed of God in Christ;" or rather, as I think it should be translated, *to Christ*, who was the seed meant in the promise; "the law, which was four hundred years after," and given to a single people only, "could not disannul, that it should

“make the” former “promise” void, or “of none effect.” That still subsisted in the same force and vigour under the law, as it did before it. For surely the performance of one covenant, which God made with their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto their posterity the land of Canaan for a possession, was no proof that he was unmindful of that better covenant, in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

You will ask, Wherefore then serveth the Law, which was given with such amazing pomp and terror to the children of Israel only, with an utter exclusion of the whole Gentile world, from whom they were by this Law separated and distinguished by the strongest fence and partition-wall that God himself could raise between them?

Why, all this notwithstanding, the law was by no means against the promises of God, as St. Paul speaks; but, on the contrary, designed to keep up the remembrance of them in the earth, and was only “added,” in the Apostle’s phrase, “till the seed should come,” to whom the original promise of this universal blessing was made; but with infinite wisdom “added, because of transgressions.” For the whole Gentile world were now in a state of apostasy from God; they served and adored the heavens, instead of the God that created them; they worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, even all the host of heaven: these, they thought, were the gods that governed the world, that gave them rain and fruitful seasons, and to whom they were indebted for all the products of the earth, and all the blessings they enjoyed in it. And it is well known from every page of Scripture, that the children of Israel, from the day that God delivered them out of the land of Egypt, till their return from their captivity in Babylon, were ever prone to follow these abominations of the Heathen, “in transgressing the covenant of the Lord, and worshipping the host of heaven*.”

“Because of these transgressions” therefore, and to keep alive the knowledge of the true God in the world, which would otherwise have been soon lost out of it, was the Law added, until the promised seed should come, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be “blessed,” and in whom all the promises of God from the foundation of the world are “Yea,” and “Amen.”

* See the 20th chapter of Ezekiel throughout:

But when the Law had done the great work intended by God, and answered the end proposed by him that gave it; when Christ, the seed promised to Abraham, and so punctually described both by Moses and the Prophets, was now actually come; the fence between Jew and Gentile is of course removed, and the partition-wall broken down: "for now," in the prophetick language of the Psalmist, "God hath made known his salvation, his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the Heathen: he hath remembered his mercy and truth towards the house of Israel, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."

This salvation was what all the faithful, who looked for redemption in Israel, plainly waited for, as well as their father Jacob, when just before his death he uttered those remarkable words: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord:" and which old Simeon fully explains, when he had his Saviour in his arms, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." There remains, therefore, now no difference between Jew and Gentile; for the righteousness of God "without the Law," as St. Paul emphatically expresses it, is now manifested, being fully witnessed both by the Law and the Prophets, which the Jews have in their own hands; and by which it is plain, that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And therefore when the Gentiles in my text, which by nature have not the Law, DO the $\tau\alpha\ \tau\omega\ \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$, the things originally intended by, and virtually contained in the Law; when they renounce their idols, and no longer worship the host of heaven, but turn to the service of the living God, who made heaven and earth; when they accept of that salvation that is now made known unto them, and submit to the righteousness of God that is now manifested in their sight; these, though they have not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, their faith in Christ and his doctrine does more than supply the place of the Law of Moses; and by their submission to that promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and who is "the very end of the Law" itself for righteousness to every one that believeth, they evidently shew the great work of the Law written in their hearts.

This is now the true, the plain, and full meaning of this greatly mistaken passage; and which I think could not possibly have been mistaken, as I before observed, if it had not been first mispointed in the original; but the comma being placed before *φύσει* instead of after it, the term Nature was in every version thrown into a wrong position; and “the Law written in their hearts” following so soon after in the same sentence, these words, which have not the least relation to each other, and which in their true meaning are as opposite as light and darkness, were blended and confounded together: and from this odd jumble of the words first sprang, as I conceive, the famous doctrine of innate ideas, and of I know-not-what imaginary law of nature originally stamped and impressed upon the soul of man at his first coming into the world; the absurdity of which doctrine has been so fully and so justly exposed by the late celebrated Mr. Locke, that I need not enlarge upon it. It will be much more to our purpose to observe, that to have “the Law written in our hearts,” is a phrase that, in the Scripture language, expresses, not the state of a blind Pagan that knew not God, but the most consummate piety, and the utmost perfection of holiness; just as sin itself, when arrived to its full growth, is said to be “written or graven on the heart.” Thus when Judah had most grievously revolted from God, and went a whoring after the idols of the nations, the Prophet says, “the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is graven on the very tables of their hearts.” Whereas when God speaks to his most faithful servants, the style then runs, “Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness; ye people in whose heart is my Law.” So the Psalmist also describes the state of such persons, “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever: the Law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.” And when Christ himself cometh into the world, he saith, “I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy Law is within my heart.”

And that exceeding great promise of God, which was to take place under the new covenant that he would make with the house of Israel, is conveyed in these remarkable words: “After those days I will put my Law in their minds, and will write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And I will be merciful to their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more.” With a view to this gracious promise, I suppose, when the ten commandments are recited in

the communion service, the church puts into our mouth that most significant and comprehensive prayer, "Lord; have mercy upon us, and write all these thy Laws in our hearts, we beseech thee." This is, I think, a full explication of what is meant in Scripture by "the Law written in our hearts;" and I would now willingly hope, that the Christian at least is convinced; that it is written not by nature, but by the spirit of the living God; nor on tables of stone only, as St. Paul speaks; but what is still a much greater blessing, on the fleshly tables of the heart.

In a word therefore, and to conclude: the whole design of this discourse has been to vindicate the honour of christianity; and to shew the absolute necessity of revelation. To make you duly sensible, how infinitely we stand indebted; not to the light of nature; which, in the things of God, is the very blackness of darkness; but to the marvellous light of Christ's Gospel: and to give you the strongest conviction of that stupendous instance of God's love to a whole world of sinners, who had apostatized and revolted from him; when he sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that "whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." For from the very darkness of Paganism it is now clearly visible, that without faith it was impossible for the Gentiles either to please, or even to know God. And the natural-religion-man himself will, I presume, subscribe to this truth, "That he that cometh unto God, must" first "believe," not only "that he is," but that "he is a rewarder" also "of them that diligently seek him." Of which blessed reward, that we may all at last be partakers, by having his laws now written on our hearts, God of his infinite mercy grant, for the sake of his only Son Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom be ascribed all glory and dominion both now and for evermore.

P O S T S C R I P T.

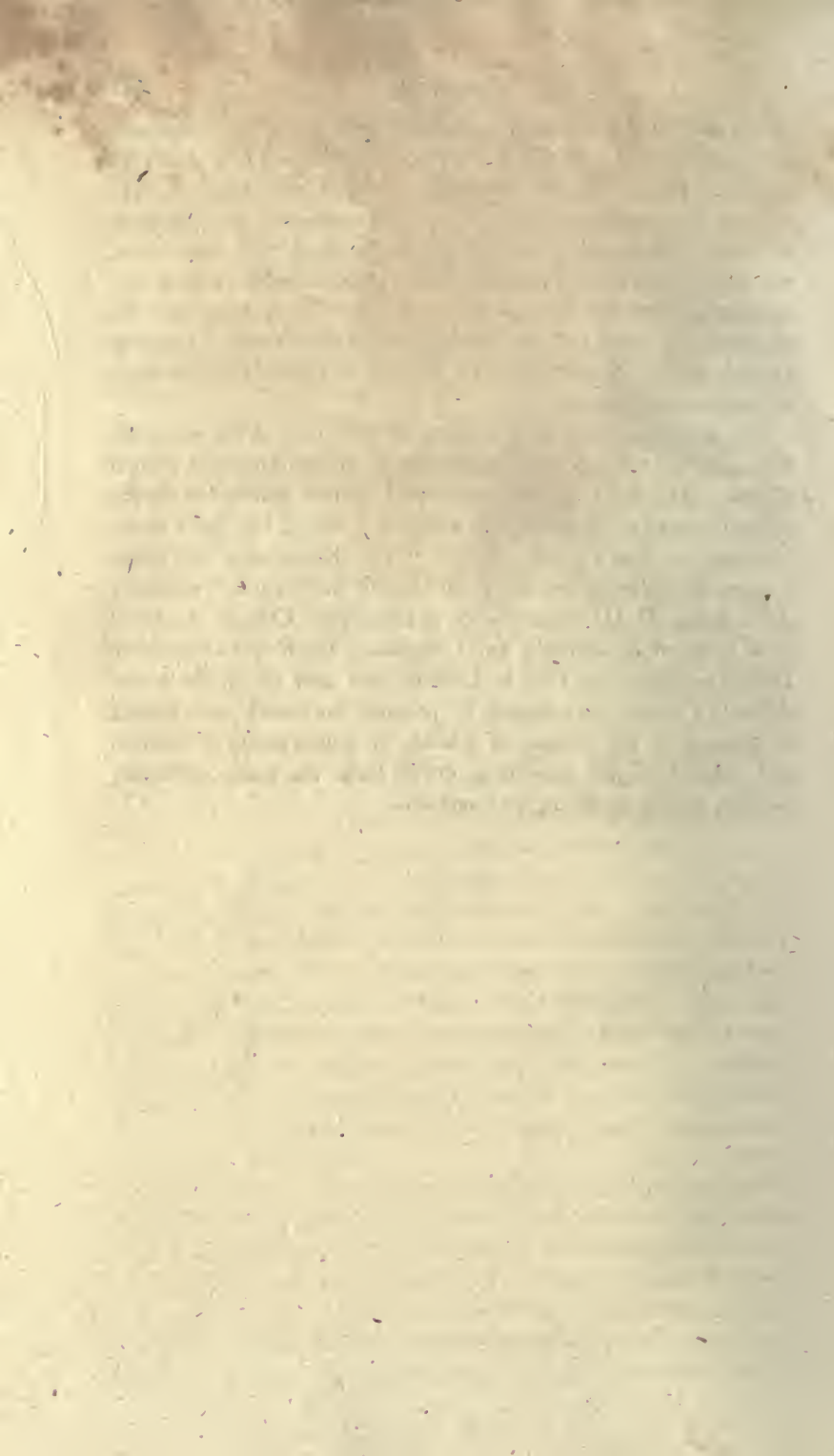
THE Reader may not be displeas'd, after this sermon of Mr. Willats's, to peruse an account sent by Mr. Fellebien to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and printed in their Memoirs, by which is fully evinc'd the absolute incapacity of man, uninstructed, for making or thinking of any religion.

“ The son of a tradesman in Chartres, who had been deaf from his birth, and consequently dumb, when he was about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, began on a sudden to speak, without its being known that he had ever heard. This event drew the attention of every one, and many believed it to be miraculous. The young man, however, gave a plain and rational account, by which it appeared to proceed wholly from natural causes. He said, that about four months before he was surpriz'd by a new and pleasing sensation, which he afterwards discovered to arise from a ring of bells; that, as yet, he heard only with one ear, but afterwards a kind of water came from his left ear, and then he could hear distinctly with both: that from this time he listened, with the utmost curiosity and attention, to the sounds which accompany those motions of the lips, which he had before remarked to convey ideas from one person to another. In short, he was able to understand them, by noting the thing to which they related, and the action they produced. And after repeated attempts to imitate them when alone, at the end of four months he thought himself able to talk. He therefore, without having intimated what had happened, began at once to speak, and affected to join in conversation, though with much more imperfection than he was aware of.

“ Many Divines immediately visited him, and questioned him concerning God, and the soul, moral good and evil, and many other subjects of the same kind; but of all this they found him totally ignorant, though he had been used to go to mass, and had been instructed in all the externals of devotion, as making the sign of the cross, looking upwards, kneeling at proper seasons, and using gestures of penitence and prayer. Of death itself,

which may be considered as a sensible object, he had very confused and imperfect ideas, nor did it appear that he had ever reflected upon it. His life was little more than animal and sensitive. He seemed to be content with the simple perception of such objects as he could perceive, and did not compare his ideas with each other, nor draw inferences, as might have been expected from him. It appeared, however, that his understanding was vigorous, and his apprehension quick; so that his intellectual defects must have been caused, not by the barrenness of the soil, but merely by the want of necessary cultivation."

The above is not the only instance of the kind that has occurred, the reader's own reflection may perhaps furnish him with several others. And if he is still desirous of farther satisfaction on the subject treated of in the above sermon, I would beg leave to recommend to him a book, entitled, "The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason and Nature," wrote by John Ellis, D. D. sometime of Brazen-Nose College, Oxford; now Vicar of St. James's, and Chaplain to the Royal Hospital in Dublin.—Printed for Dod in London, and sold by all the booksellers. I know not whether to promise the reader more benefit or pleasure in the perusal of a book, in which purity of diction, and solidity of just reasoning, drawn from the most convincing topics, are so exceedingly remarkable.



THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

DEMONSTRATED;

IN A
DIALOGUE

BETWIXT A
CHRISTIAN AND A DEIST:

WHEREIN THE CASE OF THE JEWS IS LIKEWISE
CONSIDERED.

THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY
DEMONSTRATED.



(1.) CHRISTIAN.

IT is strange you should stand it out so against your own happiness, and employ your whole wit and skill to work in yourself a disbelief of any future rewards or punishments, only that you may live easy (as you think) in this world, and enjoy your pleasures. Which yet you cannot enjoy free and undisturbed from the fear of those things that are to come, the event of which you pretend not to be sure of; and therefore are sure of a life full of trouble, that admits not of any consolation, and of a miserable and wretched death, according to the utmost that you yourself propose.

DEIST. How can you say that, when I propose to live without any fear of those things? I fear not hell, and I have discarded the expectation of heaven, because I believe neither.

CHR. Are you sure there are no such things?

DE. That is a negative, and I pretend not to prove it.

CHR. Then you must remain in a doubt of it. And what a condition is it to die in this doubt, when the issue is eternal misery! And this is the utmost, by your own confession, that you can propose to yourself. Therefore I called yours a disbelief, rather than a belief of any thing. It is we Christians who believe, you Deists only disbelieve.

And if the event should prove as you would have it, and that we should all be annihilated at our death, we should be in as

good a condition as you. But on the other side, if the event should prove as we expect it, then you are eternally miserable, and we eternally happy. Therefore one would think it the wisest part to take our side of the question; especially considering that those poor pleasures, for the sake of which you determine yourselves against us, are but mere amusements, and no real enjoyments. Nay, we had better be without them than have them, even as to this life itself. Is not temperance and a healthful constitution more pleasant than those pains and aches, sick head and stomach, that are the inseparable companions of debauchery and excess, besides the clouding our reason, and turning sottish in our understanding?

DE. We take pleasure in them for the time, and mind not the consequences—But however, a man cannot believe as he pleases. And therefore, notwithstanding all the glorious and all the terrible things you speak of, it makes nothing to me, unless you can evidently prove them to be so. And you must still leave me to judge for myself, after you have done all you can.

CHR. What I have said, is only to dispose you to hear me impartially, and not to be prejudiced against your own happiness, both here and hereafter.

(2.) DE. Well, without more prefacing, the case is this: I believe a God, as well as you; but for revelation, and what you call the Holy Scriptures, I may think they were wrote by pious and good men, who might take this method of speaking, as from God, and in his name, as supposing that those good thoughts came from Him, and that it would have a greater effect upon the people; and might couch their morals under histories of things supposed to be done, as several of the wise Heathens have taken this course, in what they told of Jupiter and Juno, and the rest of their gods and goddesses. But as to the facts themselves, I believe the one no more than the other; or that all the facts in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or in *Æsop's Fables*, were true.

CHR. You seem willing by this to preserve a respectful esteem and value for the Holy Scriptures, as being wrote by pious and good men, and with a good design to reform the manners of men. But your argument proves directly against the purpose for which you brought it, and makes the pen-men of the Scriptures to be far from good men, to be not only cheats and impostors,

but blasphemers, and an abomination before God. For such these same Scriptures frequently call those who presume to speak as from God, and in his name, when he had not sent them, and given them authority so to do. And the Law in the Scriptures condemns such to be stoned to death as blasphemers.

It was not so with the Heathens, their moralists did not use the style of "Thus saith the Lord;" and their philosophers opposed and wrote against one another without any offence. For all the matter was which of them could reason best; they pretended to no more.

And for the facts of the fables of their gods, themselves did not believe them, and have wrote the mythology or moral that was intended by them.

DE. But many of the common people did believe the facts themselves. As it is with the common people now in the church of Rome, who believe the most senseless and ridiculous stories in their books of legends to be as true as the Gospel; though the more wise among them call them only pious frauds, to encrease the devotion of the people. And so we think of your Gospel itself, and all the other books you say were wrote by men divinely inspired. We will let you keep them to cajole the mob, but when you would impose them upon men of sense, we must come to the test with you.

CHR. That is what I desire; and to see whether there are no more evidences to be given for the truth of christianity, that is, of the Holy Scriptures, than are given for the legends, and all the fabulous stories of the Heathen gods. And if so, I will give up my argument, and confess that it is not in my power to convince you.

DE. I cannot refuse to join issue with you upon this. To begin, then, I desire to know your evidences for the truth of your Scriptures, and the facts therein related.

(3.) CHR. If the truth of the book, and the facts therein related be proved, I suppose you will not deny the doctrines to be true.

DE. No: for if I saw such miracles with my eyes as are said to have been done by Moses and Christ, I could not think of any greater proof to be given, that such an one was sent of God. Therefore if your Bible be true as to the facts, I must believe it in the doctrine too. But there are other books which pretend to

give us revelations from God, and we must know which of these is true.

CHR. To distinguish this book from all others which pretend to give revelations from God, these four marks or rules were set down.

I. That the facts related be such of which mens outward senses, their eyes and ears, may judge.

[This cuts off enthusiastical pretences to revelation, and opinions which may be propagated in the dark, and like the tares not known till they are grown up, and the first beginning of them not discovered.]

II. That these facts be done openly in the face of the world.

III. That not only publick monuments, but outward institutions and actions should be appointed, and perpetually kept up in memory of them.

IV. That these institutions to be observed should commence from the time that the facts were done; and consequently that the book wherein these facts and institutions are recorded, should be written at the time, and by those who did the facts, or by eye and ear-witnesses. For that is included in this mark, and is the main part of it; to prevent false stories being coined in after ages of things done many hundred years before, which none alive can disprove. Thus Moses wrote his five books containing his actions and institutions; and those of Christ were wrote by his disciples, who were eye and ear-witnesses of what they related. And particular care was taken of this, as you may see, Acts i. 21, 22. upon choosing one to supply the place of Judas. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, until that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be witness with us of his resurrection." And St. John begins his first Epistle thus: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

I have explained this fourth mark, because the author of the detection, either wilfully or ignorantly, seems not to understand it. And this alone overthrows all the stories he has told, which he would make parallel to the facts of Moses, and of Christ; and therefore alledges that they have all these four marks. But he must

begin again, and own that these four marks still stand an irrefragable proof of the truth of any fact which has them all, till he can produce a book which was wrote by the actors or eye-witnesses of the facts it relates, and shew that such facts, having the other three marks, have been detected to be false. Which when he can do, I will give him up these four marks as an insufficient proof, and own I was mistaken in them. But hitherto they have stood the test; for he himself will not say, he has produced any such book in all his detection.

If he says that facts may be true, though no such book can be produced for them, and though they have not all the aforesaid marks, I will easily grant it. But all I contend for is, that whatever fact has all these four marks, cannot be false. For example could Moses have persuaded six hundred thousand men that he had led them through the sea in the manner related in Exodus, if it had not been true? If he could, it would have been a greater miracle than the other. The like of their being fed forty years in the wilderness without bread, by manna rained down to them from heaven. The like of Christ's feeding five thousand at a time with five loaves; and so of all the rest. The two first marks secure from any cheat or imposture at the time the facts were done, and the two last marks secure equally from any imposition in after ages, because this book which relates these facts speaks of itself as written at that time by the actors or eye-witnesses, and as commanded by God to be carefully kept and preserved to all generations, and read publickly to all the people, at stated times, as is commanded, Deut. xxxi. 10, 11, 12. And was practised, Josh. viii. 34, 35. Neh. viii. &c. And the institutions appointed in this book were to be perpetually observed from the day of the institution for ever among these people, in memory of the facts, as the passover, Exod. xii. and so of the rest. Now suppose this book to have been forged a thousand years after Moses, would not every one say when it first appeared, we never heard of this book before, we know of no such institutions, as of a passover, or circumcision, or sabbaths, and the many feasts and fasts therein appointed, of a tribe of Levi, and a tabernacle wherein they were to serve in such an order of priesthood, &c. Therefore this book must be an errant forgery, for it wants all those marks it gives of itself, as to its own continuance, and of those institutions it relates. No instance can be shewn since the world began of any book so circumstantiated that was a forgery, and passed as truth

upon any people. I think it impossible; and therefore that the four marks are still an invincible proof of the truth of that book, and those facts wherein all these marks do meet.

But since I am come upon this subject again, I will endeavour to improve it, and give four other marks, some of which no fact, however true, ever had, or can have, but the fact of Christ alone. Thus while I support the fact of Moses, I set that of Christ above him, as the lord is above the servant. And the Jews being herein principally concerned, I will consider their case likewise as we go along; therefore I add this fifth mark as peculiar to our Bible, and to distinguish it from all other histories which relate facts formerly done.

(V.) That the book which relates the facts contains likewise the law of that people to whom it belongs, and be their statute-book by which their causes are determined. This will make it impossible for any to coin or forge such a book, so as to make it pass upon any people. For example; if I should forge a statute-book for England, and publish it next term, could I make all the Judges, Lawyers, and people believe, that this was their true and only statute-book by which their causes had been determined these many hundred years past? They must forget their old statute-book, and believe that this new book, which they never saw or heard of before, was that same old book which has been pleaded in Westminster-Hall for so many ages, which has been so often printed, and the originals, of which are now kept in the Tower to be consulted as there is occasion.

DE. I grant that to be impossible. But how do you apply it?

CHR. It is evident as to the books of Moses, which are not only a history of the Jews, but their very statute-book, wherein their municipal law, as well civil as ecclesiastical, was contained.

DE. This is so indeed as to the book of Moses, to which they always appealed; "To the Law and to the testimony." And they had no other statute-book. But this will not agree to your Gospel, which is no municipal law, nor any civil law at all, and no civil causes were tried by it.

CHR. The law was given to the Jews, as a distinct and separate people from all other nations upon the earth: and therefore was a municipal law particularly for that nation only of the Jews. But christianity was to extend to all the nations of the earth; and Christians were to be gathered out of all nations; and therefore

the Gospel could not be a municipal Law as to civil rights to all nations, who had each their own municipal Laws. This could not be without destroying all the municipal Laws in the world, of every nation whatsoever; and then none could be a Christian, without at the same time becoming a rebel to the government where he lived. This would have been for Christ to have immediately set up for universal and temporal King of all the world, as the Jews expected of their Messiah, and therefore would have made Christ a King. But he instructed them in the spiritual nature of his kingdom, that it was not "of this world," nor did respect their temporal or civil matters; which therefore he left in the same state he found them, and commanded their obedience to their civil governors, though Heathen, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. And as to the Law of Moses, he left the Jews still under it, as to their civil concerns, so far as the Romans, under whose subjection they then were, would permit them. As Pilate said to them, "Ye have a Law; and judge ye him according to your Law."

But the Gospel was given as the spiritual and ecclesiastical Law to the Church whithersoever dispersed through all nations; for that did not interfere with their temporal Laws, as to civil government. And in this the fifth mark is made stronger to the Gospel than even to the Law; for it is easier to suppose that any forgery might creep into the municipal Law of a particular nation, than that all the nations whither Christianity is spread should conspire in the corruption of the Gospel, which to all Christians is of infinitely greater concern than their temporal Laws. And without such a concert of all Christian nations and people supposed, no such forgery could pass undiscovered in the Gospel, which is spread as far as Christianity, and read daily in their publick offices.

DE. But I say it is discovered, as appears by the multitude of your various Lections.

CHR. That cannot be called a forgery; it is nothing but such mistakes as may very easily happen, and are almost unavoidable, in so many copies as have been made of the Gospel, before printing was known. And considering the many translations of it into several languages, where the idioms are different, and phrases may be mistaken, together with the natural slips of amanuenses, it is much more wonderful that there are no more various lections, than that there are so many.

But in this appears the great providence of God in the care the Christians took of this, that they have marked every the least various lection, even syllabical; and that among all these there is not found one which makes any alteration either in the facts, or in the doctrines. So that instead of an objection, this becomes a strong confirmation of the truth and certainty of the Gospel, which stands thus perfectly clear of so much as any doubt concerning the facts or the doctrines therein related.

But I will now proceed to a stronger evidence than even this, and all that has been said before; which I have made the sixth mark, and that is the topick of prophecy.

(VI.) The great fact of Christ's coming into the world was prophesied of in the Old Testament from the beginning to the end, as it is said, Luke i. 70. "By all the holy prophets which have been since the world began."

This evidence no other fact ever had; for there was no prophecy of Moses, but Moses himself did prophesy of Christ, Deut. xviii. 15. (applied Acts iii. 22, 23, 24.) and sets down the several promises given of him. The first was to Adam, immediately after the fall, Gen. iii. 15. where he is called the seed of the woman, but not of the man, because he was to have no man for his father, though he had a woman to his mother. And of none other can this be said, nor that he should "bruise the serpent's head," that is, overcome the devil and all his power.

He was again promised to Abraham, as you may see, Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. See this applied Gal. iii. 16.

Jacob did expressly prophesy of him, with a mark of the time when he should come, and calls him "Shiloh," or "He that was to be sent." Gen. xlix. 10.

Balaam prophesied of him by the name of the Star of Jacob, and the Scepter of Israel. Num. xxiv. 17.

Daniel calls him the Messiah, the Prince; and tells the time of his coming, and of his death, Dan. ix. 25, 26.

It was foretold that he should be born of a virgin, Isai. vii. 14. In the city of Bethlehem, Micah v. 2. Of the seed of Jesse, Isai. xi. 1. 10. His low estate and sufferings are particularly described, Psal. xxii. and Isai. liii. And his resurrection, Psal. xvi. 10. That he should sit upon the throne of David for ever, and be called "Wonderful," the "mighty God," the "Prince of Peace," Isai. ix. 6, 7. "The Lord our righteousness,"

Jer. xxxiii. 16. Jehovah Tsidkenu, (an incommunicable name given to none but the great God alone.) And Immanuel, that is, "God with us," Isai. vii. 14. And David, whose son he was, according to the flesh, calleth him his Lord, Psal. cx. 1.

The cause of his sufferings is said to be for the sins of the people, and not for himself, Isai. liii. 4, 5, 6. Dan. ix. 26.

And as to the time of his coming, it is expressly said, (to the confusion of the Jews now) that it was to be before the scepter should depart from Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. In the second temple, Hag. ii. 7, 9. Within seventy weeks of the building of it, Dan. ix. 24. that is, (according to the prophetic known stile of a day for a year) within four hundred and ninety years after.

(1.) From these, and many more prophecies of the Messiah or Christ, his coming was the general expectation of the Jews from the beginning, but more especially about the time in which it was foretold he should come, when several false Messiahs did appear among them. And this expectation still remains with them, though they confess that the time foretold by all the Prophets for his coming, is past.

But what I have next to offer will be more strange to you. You may say it was natural for the Jews to expect their Messiah, who was prophesied of in their book of the Law, and was to be a Jew, and a King of all the earth. But what had the Gentiles to do with this? There were no prophecies to them.

Therefore what I have to shew you is, that these prophecies of the Messiah were likewise to the Gentiles. For it is said that he should be the expectation of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews. And Gen. xlix. 10. That the gathering of the people (or nations) should be to him. In the vulgar it is rendered *expectatio gentium*. "The expectation of the Gentiles." He is called "the desire of all nations," Hag. ii. 7. And I will shew you the general expectation the Gentiles had of his coming, about the time that he did come.

They knew him by the name of the East. Their tradition was, that the East should prevail, *ut valesceret oriens*, as I will shew you presently. But let me first tell you, that the Holy Scripture often alludes to him under this denomination. The blood of the great expiatory sacrifice was to be sprinkled towards the East, Lev. xvi. 14. to shew whence the true expiatory sacrifice should come. And he is thus frequently stiled in the Prophets. Zech. iii. 8. it is, said, according to the vulgar, "I will

“bring forth my servant the East.” And chap. vi. 12. “Behold the man whose name is the East.” Our English renders it in both places the Branch, for the Hebrew word bears both senses. But the Greek renders it *Ἀνατολή*, which we translate the “day spring,” Luke i. 78; and put on the margin Sun-rising or Branch. The vulgar has it *oriens ex alto*, the East or Sun-rising from on high. He is called the “Sun of righteousness,” Mal. iv. 2. And it is said Isa. lx. 3. “The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

(2.) Now, Sir, how literally was this fulfilled in the Magi (generally supposed to be Kings) coming from the East, led by a star which appeared to them in the East, to worship Christ when he was born, and to bring presents unto him as unto a King? As it is told in the second of St. Matthew.

DE. Why do you quote St. Matthew to me? You know we make no more of him than of one of your Legend-writers, and believe this story no more than that these three Kings are now buried at Cologne.

(3.) CHR. You make great use of the Legends, and answer every thing by them; and I confess they are the greatest affront to Christianity, and (if possible) a disproof of it, as it must be to those who will place them upon the same foot with the Holy Bible, as too many do in the Church of Rome, and cry, we have the authority of the Church for both. And they are taught to receive the Holy Scriptures upon the authority of the Church only. But my business is not with them now; I shall only say, that when they can bring such evidences for the truth of their Legends, or for any particular fact in them, as I do for the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and in particular for the fact of Christ, then I will believe them.

DE. Will you believe nothing that has not all these evidences you produce?

(4.) CHR. Far from it; for then I must believe nothing but this single fact of Christ: because no other fact in the world, no, not of all those recorded in Holy Scriptures, has all these evidences which the fact of Christ has. And so God has thought fitting, that this great fact above all other facts, of the greatest

glory to God, and importance to mankind, should appear with greater and more undeniable evidence than any other fact ever was in the world.

DE We are now upon the particular fact of the Magi, or wise men, coming to Christ. Have you any more to say as to that?

(5.) CHR. It has those same evidences that the truth of the Bible in general has, which are more than can be produced for any other book in the world. But now as to this fact in particular: St. Matthew was the first who wrote the Gospel, and it was in the same age when this fact was said to be done. And can you think it possible that such a fact as this could have passed without contradiction, and a publick exposing of Christianity, then so desirable and so much endeavoured by the unbelieving Jews, their High-priests, Elders, &c. as the only means for their own preservation, if the fact had not been notorious and fresh in the memory of all the people then at Jerusalem, viz. that these wise men came thither; and that Herod and the whole city were troubled at the news they brought of the birth of the King of the Jews; that Herod thereupon gathered all the chief Priests and Scribes of the people together, that they might search out of the Prophets, and know the place where Christ should be born; and then the slaughter of the infants in and about Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, which followed.—I say could such a fact as this have passed at that very time, if it had not been true? Could St. Matthew have hoped to have palmed this upon all the people, and upon those very same chief Priests and Scribes who he said were so far concerned in it? Would none of them have contradicted it, if it had been a forgery? Especially when the detecting it would have strangled Christianity in its birth. Would not they have done it who suborned false witnesses against Christ, and gave large money to the soldiers to conceal (if possible) his resurrection? Would not they have done it who persecuted Christianity with all spite and fury, and invented all imaginable false stories and calumnies against it? Whereas here was one at hand, this of the Magi, which, if false, could have been so easily detected, by appealing to every man, woman, and child, I may say, in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and even in all Judea; who no doubt had heard of the terrible massacre of so many infants, and the cause of it.

DE. I can give no account why the writers against Christianity did not offer to contradict this fact of the star and the Magi, which is put in the very front of this Gospel of St. Matthew. And there it is called his (Christ's) star. "We have seen his star in the East"—As if God had created a new and extraordinary star on purpose, as the signal of Christ hung out in the heavens, to give the world notice of his birth. But did none of the heathen Philosophers take notice of this star, or of this relation given of it by your St. Matthew?

(6.) CHR. Yes. For Chalcidius, in his comment upon Plato's *Timæus*, speaking of the presages of stars mentioned by Plato, adds, as a further proof, *Est quoque alia venerabilior & sanctior historia*.—There is likewise another more venerable and holy history, by which I doubt not he means this of St. Matthew; for what he tells seems to be taken out of it, "That by the rising of a certain unusual star, not plagues and diseases, but the descent of the venerable God, for the salvation and benefit of mortals, was observed by the Chaldeans, who worshipped this God newly born, by offering gifts unto him."

DE. This makes those Magi, or wise men, to have been Chaldeans, who, I know, were the most noted then in the world for the most curious learning, particularly in astronomy. And they were likewise east of Jerusalem, so that it might be well said they came from the East, and had seen his star in the East. But I cannot imagine how they should read the birth of a God in the face of a new star; and how that star should send them particularly to Jerusalem, though I may suppose it pointed them westward.

(7.) CHR. This will be easier to you, when you know, that all over the East there was a tradition, or fixed opinion, that about that time a King of the Jews would be born, who should rule the whole earth. And the appearance of this extraordinary star in the East was taken by them as a sign that he was then born. And whither should they go to look for the King of the Jews, but to Jerusalem? And when they came thither they enquired, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him." This made Herod gather the Priests and Scribes together. And they, by searching the Prophets, found that Bethlehem was the place;

whereupon the wise men went to Bethlehem; and to convince them that they were right, the star which they had seen in the East appeared to them again, and “went before them till it came” and stood over where the young child was.” This made them “rejoice with such an exceeding great joy.”

DE. This would go down in some measure with me, if you could make good your first *postulatum*, of such a current tradition or opinion in the East; but for this you have given no sort of proof. And all the rest which you have inferred from thence must come to the ground with it, if it be not supported. I confess it would seem as strange to me as the star to the wise men, if God had (we know not how, it is unaccountable to us) sent such a notion into the minds of men, and at that time only, of such a King to be born, and that he should be a Jew, (the then most contemptible people in the world, subdued and conquered by the Romans) and that he was to be King of the Jews, and thence to become King of all the earth, and conquer his conquerors. The Romans would have looked with disdain upon such a notion or prophecy as this; it would have made some stir among them, if they had heard of it, or given any credit to it.

(S.) CHR. You argue right; and I will shew you what stir it made among them, and I hope you will take their word, as well for this Eastern tradition, as for the effects it had among themselves. Nay, they wanted not the same tradition among themselves, and express prophecies of it in their Sibyls, and otherwise. So that the same expectation of the Messiah was then current over all the earth, with the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Tacitus, in his History, l. v. c. 13. speaking of the great prodigies that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, says, that many understood these as the forerunners of that extraordinary Person whom the ancient books of the Priests did foretel should come about that time from Judea, and obtain the universal dominion; his words are, “*Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur,*” i. e. “Many were persuaded that it was contained in the old writings of the Priests, that at that very time the East should prevail, and the Jews should have the dominion.” And Suetonius, in the Life of Vespasian, c. 1. n. 4. says, “*Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore, Judæa profecti rerum potirentur,*” i. e. “That it was an an-

cient and constant opinion (or tradition) throughout the whole East, that at that time those who came from Judea should obtain the dominion ;” that is, that some Jew should be universal king. Therefore Cicero, who was a commonwealths-man, in his second book of Divination, speaking of the books of the Sibyls, who likewise foretold this great King to come, says, “ *Cum antistibus agamus & quidvis potius ex illis libris, quam regem proferant: quem Romæ post hæc nec Dii, nec homine esse patientur.*” i. e. “ Let us deal with these priests, and let them bring any thing out of their books; rather than a king: whom neither the Gods nor men will suffer after this at Rome.”

But he was mistaken, and had his head cut off for writing against kingly government. And others more considerable than he laid greater stress upon these prophecies, even the whole Senate of Rome, as I come to shew you.

Whether these Sibyls gathered their prophecies out of the Old Testament, is needless here to examine. I am now only upon that general expectation which was then in the world of this great and universal King to come about that time.

(9.) The same year that Pompey took Jerusalem, one of these oracles of the Sibyls made a great noise, which was, “ That nature was about to bring forth a King to the Romans.” Which, as Suetonius relates in the Life of Augustus, c. 94. did so terrify the Senate, that they made a decree to expose, that is, destroy all the children born that year. *Senatum ex territum censuisse, ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur.* That none born that year should be brought up, but exposed, that is, left in some wood or desert place to perish. But he tells how this dreadful sentence was prevented. *Eos qui gravidas uxores haberent, quod ad se quisque spem traheret, curasse ne Senatus consultum ad ærarium deferretur.* That those Senators whose wives were with child, because each was in hopes of having this great King, took care that the decree of the Senate should not be put into the ærarium or treasury, without which, by their constitution, the decree could not be put in execution. And Appian, Plutarch, Sallust, and Cicero, do all say, that it was this prophecy of the Sibyls which raised the ambition of Corn. Lentulus at that time, hoping he should be this King of the Romans. Virgil, a few years before the birth of Christ, in his 4th Eclogue, quotes a prophecy of one of these Sibyls, speaking of an extraordinary person to be born about that time.

who should introduce a golden age into the world, and restore all things, and should blot out our sins.

— *Si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri.*

And calls him,

Chara Deum soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum.

Dear offspring of the Gods, and great son of Jove.

He describes a new state of things like the “new heavens” and “new earth,” Isai. lxxv. 17.

Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo.

A great order of ages does begin, wholly new.

And as Isaiah describes the happy state in the “new earth,” that the lion and the lamb should feed together, the serpent eat dust, and that they should not hurt or destroy in all the “holy mountain,” Isai. lxxv. 25. Virgil does almost repeat his words:

— *Nec magnos metuent armenta leones.*

Occidet et serpens, & fallax herba veneni

Occidet. —

And as God introduces the Messiah with saying, “I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea.” Hag. ii. 7. Virgil does in a manner translate it in this Eclogue, introducing the great person then to be born, and the joy which should be in the whole creation.

Aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,

Terrasq; tractusq; maris, caelumq; profundum.

Aspice venturo lætentur ut omnia seculo.

Lo! teeming nature bending with its load,

The earth, the ocean, and the heavens high.

Behold how all rejoice to greet the coming age.

Here the poet describes nature as in labour to bring forth this great King, as the other Prophecy of the Sibyls before-mentioned speaks. And he says, *Aderit jam tempus.* That the time was then at hand,

Jam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.

Now a new progeny from heaven descends,

And he applies it to Saloninus the Son of Pollio the Consul, then newly born, as if it was to be fulfilled in him. But as there was nothing like it in the event; so these words are too great to be applied to any mortal, or the reign of any King that ever was in the world; or to any other but to the Messiah the Lord of heaven and earth.

(10.) DE. But you know the authority of these Sibyls is disputed. Some say the Christians did interpolate them, and added to them in about a hundred years after Christ.

CHR. It is true, the Christians did often quote them against the Heathens, as St. Paul quoted the Heathen Poets to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 28. And Clem. Alexandrinus in his Strom. l. 6. says, that St. Paul quoted the Sibyls likewise in his Disputations with the Gentiles. And the Christians were called Sibyllianists, from their quoting the Sibyls so often. But Origen in his answer to Celsus, l. 7. challenges him to shew any interpolation made by the Christians, and appeals to the Heathen copies which were in their own possession, and kept with great care.

But what I have quoted to you out of Virgil was before Christ was born, and therefore clear of all these objections.

DE. Then the Jews must have had some hand in them. As likewise in that eastern tradition you have spoken of.

CHR. If so, you must suppose that the Jews had it from their own Prophets. And this will be a strong confirmation that the time of the Messiah's coming was plainly told in the prophets.

(11.) DE. What say the Jews to this? For I cannot imagine how they can get off of it.

CHR. Some of them say, That the Messiah put off his coming at the appointed time, because of their sins. Others say, he did come at the time, but has concealed himself ever since.

DE. These are mere excuses. Do they pretend any prophecy for this? But to what purpose? For these excuses shew, That prophecies are no proofs, because if they may be thus put off, they can never be known. And they may be put off and put off to the end of the world.

(12.) CHR. But now, Sir, as to your point. If this general expectation, both east and west, of the great King of the Jews,

to be born about that very time that he did come, was occasioned by the Jewish tradition of it, strengthens the truth of the Holy Scriptures, whence the Jews had it. But otherwise, if God we know not how, did send such a notion into the minds of men, all over the world, at that particular time, and never the like, either before or since, then the miracle will be greater, and the attestation to the coming of Christ stronger, and as you said, it will be more wonderful and more convincing to you, than the star was to the wise men in the east.

DE. I must take time to answer this. I made nothing at all of this of the Magi, and the star, and of Herod's slaying the infants upon it. I thought it a ridiculous story, and to have no foundation in the world. But when I see Suetonius telling us of the decree of the Senate of Rome to destroy all the children born that year, and for the same reason, for fear of this great King that was then to be born; I must think there was a strange chiming in of things here, one to answer the other. I know not how it happened. By chance, or how!

(13.) CHR. You cannot imagine there could be any concert in this matter. That the Chaldeans, and Romans, and Jews, should all agree upon the point, and hit it so exactly, without any one of them discovering the contrivance! especially when it was so terrible to both the Romans and the Jews, that they took such desperate methods to prevent it as to destroy their own children!

DE. It is ridiculous to talk of a concert. I will not put my cause upon that. Would they concert what they thought their own destruction? Besides, the Jews and Romans were then enemies; and the Chaldeans were far off, and had little correspondence with either of them. And such an universal notion could not be concerted. Whole nations could not be trusted with a secret. And if they all kept it, and against their own interest too, it would be as great a miracle as any in your Bible.

(14.) CHR. How much more possible is it to suppose, That there should be a concert between different ages, between all the ages from Adam downwards, in all those prophecies of the coming of the Messiah? How should they know it but by revelation? And would they have all agreed so exactly as to the time, place, manner, and other circumstances, if it had been a forgery contrived by different persons and in different ages?

(15.) This is an argument which St. Peter thought stronger than the conviction even of our outward senses, for having set down what he and the other two Apostles had both seen and heard upon the holy Mount, he adds, "We have yet a more sure word" (that is, a stronger proof) of prophecy, whereunto ye do well "to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. i. 19. And he enforces it thus, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

DE. I will grant his argument so far, That it is easier to suppose the senses of three men or of all the men in the world to be imposed upon, than that Adam, Abraham, and I had concerted together. But I will not give you my answer yet. Have you any more to say upon this head of prophecy?

CHR. I need say no more till your answer comes. For you have granted that this proof is stronger than what we see with our eyes.

(16.) But that your answer may take in all together, I will give you something further. I have set down already some of the great prophecies of the coming of Christ, his sufferings, death, and resurrection. But there are others which reach to several minute circumstances, such as cannot be applied to any other fact that ever yet happened, and which could not have been foreseen by any but God; nor were known by the actors who did them, else they had not done them. For they would not have fulfilled the Prophecies that went before of Christ, in applying them to him whom they crucified as a false Christ.

See then how literally several of these Prophecies were fulfilled. As Psal. lxxix. 21. "They gave me gall to eat and vinegar to drink." Then read Matt. xxvii. 34. "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." It is said, Psal. xxii. 16, 17, 18. "They pierced my hands and my feet—They stand staring and looking upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." As if it had been wrote after John xix. 23, 24. It was merely accidental in the soldiers, they would not tear his coat, because it was woven and without seam, therefore they cast lots for it: thus fulfilling this Scripture, without any knowledge of theirs, for they were Roman soldiers, and knew nothing of the Scripture. Again it is said,

Psal. xxii. 7, 8. "All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him if he will have him." Compare this with Matt. xxvii. 39, 41, 42, 43. "And they that passed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying—Come down from the cross. Like-wise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said—He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." It is said again, Zech. xi. 10. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." His very price was foretold, and how the money should be disposed of, Zech. xi. 13. fulfilled Matt. xxvii. 6, 7. And his riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, Zech. ix. 9. which the learned Rabbi Saadia expounds of the Messiah. That he should suffer with malefactors, Isai. liiii. 12. That his body should not lie so long in the grave as to see corruption. Psal. xvi. 10.

Many other circumstances are told which cannot be applied to any but to Christ. I have set down these few, that you may take them into consideration when you think fit to give your answer as to this head of Prophecies.

And you are to take care to find some other fact guarded with Prophecies like this. Or else you must confess that there is no other fact that has such evidence as this.

(17.) But before I leave this head, I must mention the Prophecies in our Bible of things yet to come to the end of the world, and of the new heavens and new earth that shall succeed.

DE. These can be no proofs here, because we cannot see the fulfilling of them.

CHR. You may believe what is to come, by the fulfilling you have seen of what is past. But I bring this now to shew you, That there is no other law or history in the world that so much as pretends to this, or to know what is to come. This is peculiar to the Holy Bible, as being written from the mouth of God.

You have seen how the current of the Prophecies of the Old Testament did point at and center in that great event the coming of the Messiah.

When he was come, then he told us more plainly of what was to come after him, even to the consummation of all things. And

by what we have seen exactly fulfilled of all he told us to this time, we must believe what remains yet to come.

(18.) How particularly did he foretel the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Matt. xxiv. And that that age should not pass till it should be fulfilled? And his very expression was literally fulfilled, That there should not be left one stone upon another in the temple, for the very foundations of it were ploughed up by Turnus Rufus. See Scaliger's Canon. Isagog, p. 304.

When Jerusalem was first besieged it was full of Christians. But the siege was raised unaccountably and for no reason that history gives. In which time the Christians seeing those signs come to pass which Christ had foretold would precede its destruction, and particularly laying hold of that caution he gave, "Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains," and that in such haste, as that he that was in the field was not to return (to Jerusalem) to fetch his garment, or he on the house top there to stay to take his goods with him; accordingly all the Christians left Jerusalem, and fled to Pella a city in the Mountains. And as soon as they were all gone, the Romans returned and renewed the siege. And so it came to pass, that when Titus sacked the city there was not one Christian found there, and the destruction fell only upon the unbelieving Jews. The others escaped, as Lot out of Sodom, by believing the prediction of that ruin,

(19.) Another very remarkable prediction of our blessed Lord in that same chapter was of the many false Christs that should come after him; and he warned the Jews not to follow them, for that it would be to their destruction. "Behold, (says he, ver. 25.) I have told you before." But they would not believe him; and accordingly it came to pass. Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews, l. xviii. c. 12. l. xx. c. 6. And de Bell. Jud. l. vii. c. 31. tells of abundance of these false Messiahs who appeared before the destruction of Jerusalem, and led the people into the wilderness, where they were miserably destroyed. The very thing of which our Saviour cautioned them, ver. 26. If they say unto you, "behold, he (that is, Christ) is in the desert, go not forth." And de Bell. Jud. l. vii. c. 12. Josephus says, that the chief cause of their obstinacy in that war with the Romans, was their expectation of a Messiah to come and deliver them, which brought

on their ruin, and made them deaf to the offers of Titus, who courted them to peace.

And since the destruction of Jerusalem there have been so many false Messiahs, that Johannis à Lent has wrote a history of them, printed Herbonæ, 1697. Which brings them down as far as the year 1682. And tells the lamentable destruction of the Jews in following them.

(20.) But the next Prophecy of our blessed Lord which I produce is more remarkable than these; and of which you see the fulfilling in a great measure, viz. That his Gospel should prevail over all the world, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it: and this told when he was low and despised, and had but twelve poor fishermen for his followers: and that his religion should conquer, not by the sword, like Mahomet's, but by patient suffering, as lambs among wolves. And in this state the Church endured most terrible persecutions, when all the rage of hell was let loose against her, for the first three hundred years, without any help but from heaven only; till at last, by the Divine Providence, the great Emperor of Rome, and other mighty Kings and Princes, without any force or compulsion, did voluntarily and freely submit their scepters to Christ.

No religion that ever was in the world was so begun, so propagated, and did so prevail: and hence we assuredly trust, that what remains will be fulfilled, of the promise of Christ to his church in the latter days.

But I speak now only of this Prophecy so long beforehand, and when there was so little appearance of its coming to pass so far as we have seen already.

Let me here remember one particular passage foretold by Christ concerning the woman, who anointed his body to the burying, That "wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her." Mark. xiv. 8, 9. And we see how it is spoken of to this day.

DE. If this book had been lost, we had not heard of this Prophecy.

CHR. So you may say of all the Bible, or of any other book; but Providence has fulfilled this Prophecy by preserving the book: and it is a prophecy that this book, at least this fact of the woman,

should be preserved for ever, and it may be preserved though that book were lost.

(21.) DE. When Prophecies are fulfilled, and the events come to pass, they are plain to every body; but why might they not have been as plain from the beginning? And then there could have been no dispute about them, as if it had been said, that such a one by name, at such a time, and in such a place, should do such things, &c.

CHR. Because God having given man free will, he does not force men to do any wicked thing: and it would be in the power of wicked men to defeat a Prophecy against themselves, as to the circumstance of time, place, or the manner of doing the thing.

For example, if the Jews had known that Christ had told his Apostles he was to be crucified, they would not have done it; they would have stoned him as they did St. Stephen; for that was the death appointed by the law for blasphemy: and they several times attempted to have stoned Christ for this, because he said I am the Son of God. John viii. 59. x. 31, 32, 33. But crucifixion was a death by the Roman law. Therefore the Jews, to fulfil this Prophecy (but not knowing it) delivered Christ to the Romans to be put to death. Yet he told them so much of it, that after he was crucified they might know it, as he said to them, John viii. 28. "When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he." And chap. x. 32, 33. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die." But they understood it not till they had done it; then they knew what the lifting up meant. And chap. xviii. 31, 32. When Pilate would have had them judge him according to their law, which was stoning, they were cautious at this time only, and said, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Because they were then under the government of the Romans. But the next words shew the design of Providence in it, "that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die." They had no such caution upon them when they stoned St. Stephen after this, nor the many times before when they took up stones to have stoned the same Jesus.

Then again, the piercing his side with the spear was no part of the Roman sentence of execution, but happened seemingly by mere accident; for the sentence of the law was to hang upon the

cross till they were dead: but that being the day of preparation for the Sabbath, which began that evening soon after Christ and the thieves were fastened to the cross, before it could be supposed they were dead, therefore, "that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day," the Jews besought Pilate that their legs might be broken (which was no part of the sentence neither, but done) lest they should escape when taken down. Accordingly the legs of the thieves were broken, for they were yet alive, and the reason why they brake not the legs of Christ was, because "they saw that he was dead already;" but to make sure, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear: little knowing that they were then fulfilling Prophecies, as that "a bone of him should not be broken." And again, "They shall look on him whom they pierced." As little did the soldiers think of it when they were casting lots upon his vesture: and the chief Priests (if they had known it or reflected upon it) would not have upbraided him in the very words that were foretold in xxii. Psalm, which I have before quoted. And they would have contrived the money they gave to Judas to have been one piece more or less than just thirty: they would not have come so punctually in the way of that Prophecy, Zech. xi. 12, 13. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." And they would have bought any other field with it, but especially not that of the Potter, which Zechariah there likewise mentions.

And as the enemies of Christ did not know they were fulfilling these Prophecies of him, so neither did his disciples at the time when they were so doing. As it is said, John xii. 16. "These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." This makes the fulfilling these Prophecies yet more remarkable.

Where Providence sees that Prophecies will not be minded, they are more express and plain: as likewise where the passions and interests of men will hurry them on towards fulfilling them. Thus Alexander the great is described as plainly almost as if he had been named, Dan. viii. 20, 21, 22. And it is said, that this Prophecy, which was shewed him by the High-Priest at Jerusalem, did encourage him in his expedition against the Persians. But it is not so when a man is to do foolish and wicked things, and things hurtful to himself; for if these were told plainly and

literally, it would be in his power to do otherwise; unless God should force his will, and then he would not be a free agent.

(22.) DE. I must have recourse to the Jews in answer to these Prophecies of the Messiah which you have brought; for they owning these Scriptures as Revelations given them by God, must have some solution or other for them, or else give themselves up as self-condemned.

CHR. The answers the Jews give will convince you the more, and render them indeed self-condemned.

Before the coming of Christ the Jews understood these texts as we do, to be certainly meant of the Messiah, and of none other.

But since that time they have forced themselves to put the most strained and contradictory meanings upon them; for they agree not in their expositions, and the one does manifestly destroy the other.

Thus that text I before quoted, Gen. xlix. 10. was understood by the Chaldee and ancient Jewish interpreters to be meant of the Messiah.

Yet of their modern Rabbies some say, that it was meant of Moses; but others reject that, First, Because it is plain that the gathering of the nations or Gentiles was not to Moses. Secondly, Because the scepter was not given to Judah till long after Moses. The first of it that appears was Judg. xx. 18. when Judah was commanded by God to "go up first," and lead the rest of the tribes; and David was the first King of the tribe of Judah. Thirdly, Because Moses did prophecy of a greater than himself to come, to whom the people should hearken. Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.

For these reasons, other Rabbies say it could not be meant of Moses, but they apply it to the tabernacle at Shiloh. This was only for the sake of the word Shiloh, for otherwise it bears no resemblance either to the gathering of the Gentiles, or the scepter of Judah: and though the house of God was first set up at Shiloh, yet it was removed from thence and established at Jerusalem; which was the place of which Moses spoke that God would place his name there, as I shall shew you presently.

This interpretation therefore being rejected, other Rabbies say, that this Prophecy must be meant of the Messiah, but that by the word scepter is not to be understood a scepter of rule or government, but of correction and punishment, and that this should not

depart from Judah till Shiloh came. But the text explaining scepter by the word law-giver, that the scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet until Shiloh came, overthrows this interpretation, and shews the scepter here mentioned to be meant of a scepter of rule and government. Again, Joshua gave them rest from their enemies round about; and the land had rest many years under their Judges; and David delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; and under Solomon they were the richest and happiest people upon earth; and frequently after they were in good condition and at ease: so that the scepter of correction did often depart from them before Shiloh came.

This is so evident, that others of them allow this scepter to be a scepter of government, but they say the meaning is, that the scepter shall not finally or for ever depart from Judah, because the Messiah will come and restore it to Judah again. But this is adding to the text, and making a new text of it, and quite different from the former, nay directly opposite to it; for the text speaks only of the departing of the scepter, but nothing of the restoring it; and it cannot be restored till once it is departed: therefore this exposition saying it "shall depart," and the text saying it "shall not depart," are directly contrary.

Lastly, there are others who throw aside all these excuses, and say, that the scepter or dominion is not yet departed from Judah, for that some Jew or other may have some sort of rule or government, in some part or other of the world, though we know it not.

DE. As if the Jews (who hold the best correspondence with one another of any people) could not tell this place, if there were any such, where they were governed by their own laws, and by governments of their own nation, though in subjection to the government of the country where they lived.

These salvos of the Jews are contradictory to each other, they are poor excuses, and shew their cause to be perfectly destitute.

But I have an objection against this Prophecy, which affects both Jews and Christians: that the regal scepter did depart from the tribe of Judah long before your Shiloh came.

CHR. First, This prophecy does not call the scepter a regal scepter, and therefore denotes only government in the general.

Secondly, The whole land and the nation took their name from Judah. It was called the land of Judah, and the nation took the

name of Jews from Judah, as before that of Hebrews from Heber their progenitor, Gen. x. 25. And this Prophecy spoke of those times when Judah should be the father of his country, and the whole nation should be comprehended under the name of Judah: and therefore Judah holds the scepter wherever a Jew governs. Besides, the words scepter and throne are used in relation to inferior governors, to tributary kings, and kings in captivity; thus it is said, that thirty-seven years after the captivity of Judah, the king of Babylon set the throne of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, above the thrones of the kings that were with him in Babylon. 2 Kings xxv. 27, 28. This was more than half the time of the captivity; and this was continued to Jehoiachin all the "days of his life," (ver. 29, 30.) which might last till the end, or near the end, of the captivity. But besides the king; the Jews had governors of their own nation allowed them, who were their archontes or rulers; and they enjoyed their own laws, though in subjection to the king of Babylon. The elders of Judah (which was a name of government) are mentioned in the captivity. Ezek. viii. 1. And the chief of the Fathers of Judah; and the Priests and the Levites. Ezra i. 5. And after the captivity; they had a trisiatha, or governor of their own nation. Ezra ii. 63; Neh. viii. 9. And the throne, or the governor, is named, Neh. iii. 7. So that here was still the throne or scepter of Judah.

And from the time of the Maccabees to their conquest by the Romans, the supreme authority was in their High Priests. As it was afterwards, but in subjection to the Romans; and they enjoyed their own laws. "Pilate said unto him; take ye him, and judge him according to your law." John xviii. 31. And though they answered, "it is not lawful for us to put any man to death;" the reason is given in the next verse, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spake; signifying what death he should die." For crucifixion was a Roman death, but stoning by the Law of Moses was the death for blasphemy; of which they accused him. And they afterwards stoned St. Stephen for the same (alleged) crime, according to their own law. Their High-Priests and Council had full liberty to meet when they pleased; and to act according to their law. And Christ himself owns they "sat in Moses's seat." Matth. xxiii. 2. The High-Priest sat to judge St. Paul; who applied to him that text, Exod. xxii. 28. "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people, or speak ill of him," as the Apostle renders it, Acts xxiii. 5. So

that here the government was still in the Jews, though in subjection to the Romans; and thus it continued till the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple by the Romans. But since that time they are dispersed in all countries, and have no governor or ruler of their own in any. The scepter is entirely departed from them.

DE. It is impossible but the Jews must see the difference of their state before the destruction of Jerusalem, and since, and of their condition as to government in their several captivities, and now in their dispersion. In the former, they had still a face of government left among themselves: but now, none at all. And their excuses which you have mentioned, render them indeed self-condemned.

What do they say to that text you have quoted, Jer. xxiii. 17, &c. that David should never want a son to sit upon his throne, &c. You Christians apply it to Christ, who was called the Son of David; but to whom do the Jews apply it?

CHR. Some of them say, that David will be raised from the dead, and made immortal, to fulfil this prophecy. Others say, that after the Messiah, who is to be of the seed of David, he shall thence forward no more want a son, &c.

DE. Both these interpretations are in flat contradiction to the text. The text says, shall never want; these say, shall want for a long time; they must confess now for near seventeen hundred years together, and how much longer they cannot tell. They have had none to sit in Moses's seat, or on the throne of David, though in subjection to their enemies, as they had in the worst of their captivities; but have not now in their dispersion.

But is there any difference betwixt what you call the cathedra, or seat of Moses, and the throne of David?

CHR. None as to government; for Moses was king in Jeshurun, Deut. xxxiii. 5; but David was the first king of the tribe of Judah, which was to be the name of the whole nation; and Christ was called the King of the Jews. It was the title set upon his cross. But after him none ever had that title to this day.

DE. This is not to be answered by the Jews. But pray what person is it do they say was meant in the 53d of Isaiah, which you have quoted?

CHR. They will not have it to be any person at all; for they can find none, except our Christ, to whom these prophecies can

any way be applied. Therefore they say it must be meant of the nation of the Jews, whose sufferings, &c. are there described in the name of a person, by which the people are to be understood.

DE. But the people and the person there described as suffering, &c. are plainly contra-distinguished. It is said, ver. 8, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And ver. 3, 4, &c. "We" (the people) like sheep have gone astray—And the "Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," that is, of the people: who are here called wicked. But he is called "My righteous servant, who did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Therefore this people and the person here spoke of could not be the same. They are opposed to each other. The one called righteous, the other wicked. The one to die for the other, and to justify the other. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, &c."

CHR. The Jews before Christ came understood this prophecy of the Messiah, as indeed it can be applied to none other: but the Jews since Christ, to avoid the force of this and other prophecies which speak of the sufferings and death of the Messiah, have invented two Messiahs, one Ben-Joseph, of the tribe of Ephraim, who is to be the suffering Messiah, the other Ben David, of the tribe of Judah, who is to triumph gloriously, and shall raise from the dead all the Israelites, and among them the first Messiah, Ben-Joseph.

DE. Does the Scripture speak of two Messiahs, and the one raising the other?

CHR. No; not a word: but only of the Messiah, which shews it spoke only of one. But it mentions the twofold state of this Messiah, the first suffering, the second triumphing. Whence the modern Jews have framed to themselves these two Messiahs.

DE. This is shameful! And plainly to avoid the prophecies against them.

CHR. This of Isaiah is fully explained, Dan. ix. 24, &c. where it is said, that the Messiah the Prince should be cut off, but not for himself, but for the transgressions of the people, "To make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity." And that this was to be within four hundred and ninety years after the building of the second temple, which I have mentioned before.

DE. I cannot imagine how the Jews get clear of this.

CHR. They cannot. But in spite to it, they seek now to undervalue the whole book of Daniel, though they dare not totally reject it, because it was received by their forefathers, who preceded Christ. But about a hundred years after Christ they made a new distribution of the books of the Old Testament, different from their fathers, and took the book of Daniel out of the middle of the Prophets, where it was placed before, and put it last of all. But more than this, to lessen the credit of this book, they adventured to shake the authority of their whole Scriptures; for they took upon them to make a distinction of the books of the Scripture, and made them not all inspired or canonical, but some of them they called *Ἁγίαγραφα*, that is, holy or pious books, though in a lower class than those called inspired or canonical Scriptures. And they put the book of Daniel into the inferior class; but in that book Daniel speaks of himself as having received these prophecies immediately from an angel of God. Wherein if he told us the truth, it must be put in the highest class of canonical Scripture; but if he told us false, then this book is quite through all a lie, and blasphemous too, in fathering it all upon God! So that the distinction of our modern Jews confounds themselves. And since they allow this book of Daniel a place among the *Ἁγίαγραφα*, or holy writings, they cannot deny it to be truly canonical, as all their fathers owned it before the coming of Christ. And if they throw off Daniel, they must discard Ezekiel too; for he gives the highest attestation to Daniel that can be given to mortal man; he makes him one of the three most righteous men to be found in all ages, and the very standard of wisdom to the world. Ezek. xiv. 14, 20. xxviii. 3.

DE. What do they say to Hag. ii. 7, 9; where it is said, that Christ was to come into the second Temple?

CHR. Some of them say, that this must be meant of a temple yet to be built.

DE. This is denying the prophecy; for it is said, ver. 7, "I will fill this house with glory, &c." And ver. 9, "The glory of this latter house—And in this place will I give peace, &c.:" but I am not to defend the cause of the Jews. It seems to me very desperate. I own you Christians have the advantage of them in this.

CHR. And I hope it will have so much effect with you, as to make you consider seriously of the weight of this argument of prophecy we have discoursed.

DE. Let us at present leave this head of prophecy. Have you any further evidence to produce for your Christ?

(VII.) CHR. I have one more, which is yet more peculiar to him than even that of prophecy. For whatever weak pretence may be made of some prophecies among the Heathen, as to some particular events, of little consequence to the world, yet they never offered at that sort of evidence I am next to produce; which is not only prophecies of the fact, and that from the beginning of the world, but also types, resemblances, and exhibitions of the fact, in outward sensible institutions, ordained as law from the beginning, and to continue till the fact they prefigured should come to pass.

(1.) Such were the sacrifices instituted by God immediately upon the fall, (and upon his promise of the life-giving seed, Gen iii. 15.) as types of that great and only propitiatory sacrifice for sin which was to come. Whose blood they saw continually shed (in type) in their daily sacrifices.

These were continued in the Heathen posterities of Adam by immemorial tradition from the beginning, though they had forgot the beginning of them, as they had of the world, or of mankind; yet they retained so much of the reason of them, as that they had universally the notion of a vicarious atonement, and that our sins were to be purged by the blood of others suffering in our stead. As likewise, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, but that a more noble blood was necessary. Hence they came to human sacrifices, and at last to sacrifice the greatest, most noble, and most virtuous; and such offered themselves to be sacrificed for the safety of the people. As Codrus, King of the Athenians, who sacrificed himself on this account. The like did Curtius for the Romans, as supposing himself the bravest and most valuable of them all. So the Decii, the Fabii, &c. Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia for the Greek army; and the King of Moab sacrificed his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, 2 Kings iii. 27. Thus the sacrificing (not their servants or slaves, but) their children to Moloch, is frequently mentioned of the Jews, which they did in imitation of the Heathen, as it is said, Psal. cvi. 35, 36, 37, 38. "They were mingled among the Heathen, and learned their works; and they served their idols—
"Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto the idols.

“ of Canaan, &c.” Pursuant to which notion, the Prophet introduceth them arguing thus: “ Wherewith I shall come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Micah vi. 6, 7. They were plainly searching after a complete and adequate satisfaction for sin; and they thought it necessary.

DE. No doubt they thought so; but that did not make it necessary.

CHR. The doctrine of satisfaction is a subject by itself; which I have treated elsewhere, in my answer to the examination of my last dialogue against the Socinians. But I am not come so far with you yet; I am now only speaking of sacrifices as types of the sacrifice of Christ.

(2.) And besides sacrifice in general, there were afterwards some particular sacrifices appointed more nearly expressive of our redemption by Christ. As the passover, which was instituted in memory of the redemption of the children of Israel (that is, the church) out of Egypt, (the house of bondage of this world, where we are in servitude to sin and misery) in the night when God slew all the first-born of the Egyptians: but the destroyer was to pass over those houses where he saw the blood of the Paschal Lamb upon the door-posts. And it was to be eaten with unleavened bread, expressing the sincerity of the heart, without any mixture or taint of wickedness. And thus it is applied, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. “ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

(3.) There was a double exhibition of Christ on the great day of expiation, which was but once a year; on which day only the High Priest entered into the holy of holies (which represented heaven, Exod. xxv. 40. Wisd. ix. 8. Heb. ix. 24.) with the blood of the sacrifice, whose body was burnt without the camp; to shew God's detestation of sin, and that it was to be removed

far from us; and that we must go out of the camp, that is, out of this world, bearing our reproach for sin, before we can be quite freed from it. See how exactly this was fulfilled in Christ, Heb. xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14. "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High-Priest for sin, are burnt without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

The other lively representation of Christ's bearing our sins, and taking them away from us, which was made on the same day of expiation, was the scape goat, Lev. xvi. 21, 22. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities, into a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." This is so plain, that it needs no application,

(4.) Another express representation of Christ was the brazen serpent in the wilderness, by looking upon which the people were cured of the stings of the fiery serpents. So in looking upon Christ by faith, the sting of the old serpent, the devil, is taken away. And the lifting up the serpent did represent Christ's being lifted up upon the cross. Christ himself makes the allusion, Joh. iii. 14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life,"

(5.) He was likewise represented by the manna; for he was the true bread that came down from heaven to nourish us unto eternal life. Joh. 31 to 36.

(6.) As also by the rock, whence the waters flowed out to give them drink in the wilderness. "And that rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 4,

(7.) And he was not only their meat and drink, but he was also their constant guide, and led them in a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. And the cloud of glory in the Temple, in which God appeared, was by the Jews understood as a type of the Messiah, who is the true Shechina, or habitation of God.

(8.) The sabbath is called a shadow of Christ, Col. ii. 17. It was a figure of that eternal rest procured to us by Christ; therefore it is called a sign of the perpetual covenant, Exod. xxxi. 16, 17. Ezek. xx. 12.

(9.) And such a sign was the Temple at Jerusalem; at which place, and none other, the sacrifices of the Jews were to be offered, Deut. xii. 11, 13, 14. Because Christ was to be sacrificed there, and as a token of it, those sacrifices which were types of him were to be offered only there.

And so great stress was laid upon this, that no sin of the Jews is oftener remembered than their breach of this command. It was a blot set upon their several reformatations, otherwise good and commendable in the sight of God, that the high places (where they used to sacrifice) were not taken away. This is marked as the great defect in the reformation of Asa, 1 Kings xv. 14; of Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings xxii. 43; of Jehoash, 2 Kings xii. 3; of Amaziah, 2 Kings xv. 4; of Jotham, ver. 35. But they were taken away by Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4; and the people instructed to sacrifice and burn incense at Jerusalem only. 2 Chron. xxxii. 12. Isai. xxxvi. 7.

There was likewise a further design of Providence in limiting their sacrifices to Jerusalem, which was, that after the great propitiatory sacrifice of Christ had been once offered there, God was to remove the Jews from Jerusalem, that they might have no sacrifice at all (as, for that reason, they have not had in any part of the world near these seventeen hundred years past) to instruct them. That (as the Apostle speaks to them, Heb. x. 26.) "there remaineth no more" (or other) "sacrifice for sins." And since by the Law their sins were to be purged by sacrifice, they have now no way to purge their sins; to force them (as it were) to look back upon that only sacrifice which can purge their sins. And till they return to that, they must have no sacrifice at all, but

die in their sins. As Jesus said unto them, "I go my way, and ye shall die in your sins.—For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" John viii. 21, 24.

And Daniel prophesied expressly, that soon after the death of the Messiah, the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary should be destroyed, and that the sacrifice should cease, "Even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate." Dan. ix. 26, 27.

And this desolation of theirs, and what was determined upon them, was told them likewise by Hosea, chap. iii. 4. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a sacrifice." But he says in the next verse, That in the latter days they shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King." That is, the Son of David, their Prince and Messiah. As he is called Messiah the Princ. Dan. ix. 25.

Thus as salvation was of the Jews, because Christ was to come of them, so this salvation was only to be had at Jerusalem, where he was to suffer, and by which only salvation was to be had.

(10.) DE. This argument is to the Jews; and if I were a Jew it would move me, because they never were so long without king, temple, or sacrifice.

CHR. But the prophecies of it, and these fulfilled as you have seen; and Christ being so plainly pointed at, and the place of his passion, by limiting the sacrifices to Jerusalem only; and by causing the legal sacrifices to cease throughout the world, to shew that they were fulfilled: all this is a strong evidence to you of the truth of these things, and of our Jesus being the Messiah, or Christ, who was prophesied of.

DE. I cannot deny but there is something remarkable in this, which I will take time to consider; but I do not see how the Jews can stand out against this, because this mark given by Daniel of the Messiah, that soon after his death the sacrifice should cease, cannot agree to any after-Messiah who should now come so many ages after the sacrifice has ceased.

CHR. Since we have fallen into the subject of the Jews, I will give you another prophecy which cannot be fulfilled in any after-Messiah whom the Jews expect. And it will be also a confirmation to you of the truth of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures.

Thus God speaks, Jer. xxiii. 20, 21, 22. “ Thus saith the Lord, if you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites, the Priests, my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.”

Now let the Jews tell in which Son of David this is fulfilled, except only in our Christ.

And how this is made good to the Priests and Levites, otherwise than as Isaiah prophesied, chap. lxvi. 21. “ And I will also take of them” (the Gentiles) “ for Priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” And as it is thus applied, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, and Rev. i. 6. And this evangelical priesthood is multiplied as the stars of heaven, (which they are frequently called) not like the tribe of Levi, which could not afford Priests to all the earth.

And as I said before of Jerusalem and the sacrifices there, that they are ceased, to shew they are fulfilled, so here, after this Son of David was come, all his other sons ceased, and the very genealogy of their tribes, and so of Judah, is lost, as also of the tribe of Levi; so that the Jews can never tell, if any after-Messiah should appear, whether he were of the tribe of Judah, far less whether he were of the lineage of David; nor can they shew the genealogy of any they call Levites now among them.

This is occasioned by their being dispersed among all nations, and yet, preserved a distinct people from all the earth, though without any country of their own, or King, or Priest, or temple, or sacrifice. And they are thus preserved by the providence of God, (so as never any nation was since the foundation of the world) to shew the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning them, and the judgments pronounced against them for their crucifying their Messiah; and that their conversion may be more apparent to the world, and their being gathered out of all nations, and restored to Jerusalem (as is promised them) when they shall come to acknowledge their Messiah.

And God not permitting them to have any king or governor upon earth, ever since their last dispersion by the Romans, (lest they might say, that the scepter was not departed from Judah) is to convince them (when God shall take the veil off their heart)

that no other Messiah who can come hereafter can answer this prophecy of Jeremiah, or that of Jacob, that the scepter should not depart from Judah till Shiloh came.

(11.) And it is wonderful to consider, how expressly their present state is prophesied of, that it could not be more literal, if it were to be worded now by us who see it. As that they should be scattered into all countries, sifted as with a sieve among all nations, yet preserved a people; and that God would make an utter end of those nations who had oppressed them, and blot out their names from under heaven. (As we have seen it fulfilled upon the great empires of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Romans, who one after the other, had miserably wasted the Jews) but that the name of the Jews (the fewest and poorest of all nations) should remain for ever, and they a people distinct from all the nations in the world, though scattered among them all. Read the prophecies express upon this point. Jer. xxx. 11. xxxi. 36, 37. xxxiii. 24, 25, 26. xlv. 28. Isai. xxvii. 7. xxix. 7, 8. liv. 9, 10. lxxv. 8. Ezek. vi. 8. xi. 16, 17. xii. 15, 16. Amos ix. 8, 9. Zech. x. 9. And it was foretold them long before, that thus it would be, Lev. xxvi. 44. and this "in the latter days." Deut. iv. 27, 30, 31. Thus Moses told them of it so long before, as the after-prophets frequently; and you see all these prophecies literally fulfilled and fulfilling. The like cannot be said of any other nation ever was upon the earth! So destroyed, and so preserved! And for so long a time! Having worn out all the great empires of the world, and still surviving them! To fulfil what was further prophesied of them to the end of the world.

DE. I cannot say but there is something very surprizing in this: I never thought of it before. It is a living prophecy. which we see fulfilled and still fulfilling at this day before our eyes. For we are sure these prophecies were not coined yesterday; and they are as express and particular, as if they were to be wrote now, after the events are so far come to pass.

(12.) CHR. As the door was kept open to Christ before he came, by the many and flagrant prophecies of him, and by the types representing him, so was the door for ever shut after him, by those prophecies being all fulfilled and completed in him, and applicable to none who should come after him; and by all the types ceasing, the shadows vanishing when the substance was

come. No Messiah can come now, before the scepter depart from Judah, and the sacrifice from Jerusalem. Before the sons of David (all except Christ) shall cease to sit upon his throne, none can come now, within four hundred and ninety years of the building of the second Temple; nor come into that very Temple, as I have before shewed was expressly prophesied by Daniel and Haggai.

DE. I know not what the Jews can say, who own these prophecies.

CHR. They say, that the coming of the Messiah at the time spoke of in the Prophets, has been delayed because of their sins.

DE. Then it may be delayed for ever, unless they can tell us when they will grow better. But, however, these prophecies have failed which spoke of the time of the Messiah's coming; and they can never be a proof hereafter, because the time is past. So that, according to this, they were made for no purpose, unless to shew that they were false; that is, no prophecies at all!

But were these prophecies upon condition? Or was it said that the coming of the Messiah should be delayed if the Jews were sinful?

CHR. No: so far from it, that it was expressly prophesied that the coming of the Messiah should be in the most sinful state of the Jews, and to purge their sins, Dan. ix. 24. Zech. xiii. 1. And the ancient tradition of the Jews was pursuant to this, that at the coming of the Messiah the Temple should be a den of thieves. Rabbi Juda in Masoreta. And a time of great corruption. Talmud. tit. de Synedrio, and de Ponderibus, &c.

But more than this, the very case is put of their being most sinful, and it is expressly said, that this should not hinder the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, spoke of as the Son of David, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15, 16. Psal. lxxxix. 30. 33—37.

But it was prophesied that they should not know their Messiah, and should reject him when he came, that he should be a "stone of stumbling," and a "rock of offence to them." Isai viii. 14, 15. And that "their eyes should be closed," that they should not understand their own Prophets, chap. xxix. 9, 10, 11. That their builders should reject the head stone of the corner, Psal. cxviii. 22. And the like in several other places of their own Prophets. And thus they mistook the prophecy concerning the coming of Elias, whom it is said they knew not, "but did

“to him what they listed,” and so the same of Christ, Matth. xvii. 12. And it is said, 1 Cor. ii. 8. that “had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

DE. This indeed solves the prophecies, both those of the coming of the Messiah, and of the Jews not knowing him, and therefore rejecting him; and likewise obviates this excuse of theirs; for if they were very sinful at that time, it was a greater punishment of their sin not to know, and to reject their Messiah, than his not coming at that time would have been.

CHR. The great sin mentioned for which they were punished by several captivities, was their idolatry, the last and longest of which captivities was that of seventy years in Babylon; since which time they have forsaken their idolatry, and have never been nationally guilty of it since, but always had it in the utmost abhorrence. But since their rejecting their Messiah, they have been now near seventeen hundred years not in a captivity, where they might be all together, and enjoying their own law, government, and worship, in some manner, but dispersed over all the world, without country of their own, or King, or Priest, or Temple, or sacrifice, or any Prophet to comfort them, or give them hopes of a restoration; and all this come upon them, not for their old sin of idolatry, but from that curse they imprecated upon themselves, when they crucified their Messiah, saying, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children.’ Which cleaves unto them from that day to this, and is visible to all the world but to themselves! And what other sin can they think greater than idolatry, for which they have been punished so much more terribly than for all their idolatries; what other sin can this be, but their crucifying the Messiah! And here they may see their sinful state, which they alledge as an excuse for their Messiah’s not coming at the time foretold by the Prophets, rendered tenfold more sinful, by their rejecting him when he came.

DE. This is a full answer, and convincing as to the Jews. But have you any more to say to me?

(13.) CHR. I have one thing more to offer, which may come under this head of types, and that is, persons who represented Christ in several particulars, and so might be called personal types.

And I will not apply these out of my own head, but as they are applied in the New Testament, which having all the marks of

the Old Testament, and stronger evidence than these, in those marks we are now upon, their authority is indisputable.

(1.) I begin with Adam, who gave us life and death too; and Christ came by his death to restore us to life again, even life eternal. Hence Christ is called the second Adam, and Adam is called the figure of Christ. The parallel betwixt them is insisted on, Rom. v. 12. to the end, and 1 Cor. xv. 45, to 50. Eve received her life from Adam, as the church from Christ. She was taken out of the side of Adam when he was in a dead sleep; and after Christ was dead, the sacraments of water and blood flowed out of his side, that is, baptism whereby we are born into Christ, and the sacrament of his blood, whereby we are nourished into eternal life.

(2.) Enoch was carried up bodily into heaven; as Elijah. One under the patriarchal, the other under the legal dispensation. In both, the ascension of Christ was prefigured.

(3.) Noah, a preacher of righteousness to the old world, and father of the new. Who saved the church by water, the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.

(4.) Melchisedec, that is, King of Righteousness, and King of Peace, and Priest of the most High God; who was made like unto the Son of God, a Priest continually. Heb. vii. 1, 2, 3.

(5.) Abraham, the friend of God, and Father of the Faithful, the heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13: In whom all the nations of the earth are blessed, Gen. xviii. 18.

(6.) Isaac, the heir of this promise, was born after his father and mother were both past the age of generation in the course of nature, Gen. xvii. 17. xviii. 11. Rom. iv. 19. Heb. xi. 11, 12. The nearest type that could be to the generation of Christ wholly without a man.

And his sacrifice had a very near resemblance to the sacrifice and death of Christ, who lay three days in the grave, and Isaac was three days a dead man (as we say in the Law) under the sentence of death, Gen. xxii. 4. whence Abraham received him in a figure, Heb. xi. 19. that is, of the resurrection of Christ. And Abraham was commanded to go three days journey to sacrifice Isaac upon the same mountain (according to the ancients) where Christ was crucified, and where Adam was buried. Again, the common epithet of Christ, i. e. "The only begotten of the Father, and his beloved Son," were both given to Isaac, Gen.

xxii. 2. Heb. xi. 17. For he was the only son that was begotten in that miraculous manner, after both his parents were decayed by nature. And he was the only son of the promise, which was not made to the seed of Abraham in general, but "in Isaac shall thy seed be called," Gen. xxi. 12. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ," Gal. iii. 16.

And as Isaac, which signifies rejoicing, or laughing for joy, was thus the only begotten of his parents, so Abram signifies the glorious father, and Abraham (into which his name was changed on the promise of Isaac, Gen. xvii. 5, 16.) signifies the father of a multitude, to express the coming in of the Gentiles to Christ, and the increase of the Gospel; whence it is there said to Abraham, "A father of many nations have I made thee, and in thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

Isaac who was born by promise of a free-woman, represented the Christian church, in opposition to Ishmael who was born after the flesh, of a bond-maid, and signified the Jewish church under the law. See this allegory carried on, Gal. iv. 21. to the end.

(7.) Jacob his Vision of the Ladder (Gen. xxviii. 12.) shews the intercourse which was opened by Christ betwixt heaven and earth, by his making peace: and to this he alludes when he says, "Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." John i. 15.

And Jacob's wrestling with the angel, (Gen. xxxii. 24, &c. Hos. xii. 4.) and as it were prevailing over him by force to bless him, shews the strong and powerful intercession of Christ; whereby (as he words it, Matt. xi. 12.) "heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Whence the name of Jacob was then turned to Israel, that is, one who prevails upon God, or has power over him; God representing himself here as overcome by us: and the name of Israel was ever after given to the church. But much more so when Christ came, as he said, Matt. xi. 12. "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," &c. that is, from the first promulgation of Christ being come. Thenceforward the Gentiles began to press into the Gospel, and as by force to take it from the Jews. This was signified in the same Jacob, that is,

a supplanter, for the Gentiles here supplanted their elder brother the Jews, and stole the blessing and heirship from them.

(8.) Joseph was sold by his brethren out of envy; but it proved the preservation of them and all their families: and Christ was sold by his brethren out of envy; Mark xv. 10. which proved the means of their redemption: and Christ, as Joseph, became Lord over his brethren.

(9.) Moses calls Christ a Prophet like unto himself. Deut. xviii. 18. He represented Christ the great Lawgiver; and his delivering Israel out of Egypt, was a type of Christ's delivering his church from the bondage of sin and hell.

(10.) Joshua called also Jesus, Heb. iv. 8. overcame all the enemies of Israel, and gave them possession of the Holy Land, which was a type of heaven: and Christ appeared to Joshua, as Captain of the Host of the Lord. Jos. v. 14. So that Joshua was his Lieutenant representing him.

(11.) Sampson, who by his single valour and his own strength overcame the Philistines, and slew more at his death than in all his life, was a representation of Christ, who "trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him, but his own arm brought him salvation." Isai. lxiii. 3, 5. But his death completed his victory, whereby he overcame all the power of the enemy, "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." Col. ii. 15.

(12.) David, whose Son Christ is called; speaks frequently of him in his own person, and in events which cannot be applied to David, as Psal. xvi. 10. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption;" for David has seen corruption. Christ is said to sit upon the throne of David. Isa. ix. 7. And Christ is called by the name of David, Hos. iii. 5. and frequently in the Prophets.

David from a shepherd became a King and a Prophet, denoting the threefold office of Christ, pastoral, regal, and prophetical.

(13.) Solomon, the wisest of men, his peaceable and magnificent reign, represented the triumphal state of Christ's kingdom, which is described, Psal. lxxii. inscribed for Solomon, (there called the king's son) but far exceeding the glory of his reign, or what can possibly be applied to him, as ver. 5, 8, 11, 17. But his reign came the nearest of any to that universal and glorious reign there described, particularly in his being chosen to build the

temple, because he was a man of peace, and had shed no blood, like David his father, who conquered the enemies of Israel, but Solomon built the church in full peace; and as it is particularly set down 1 Kings vi. 7. and no doubt he was ordered by God so to do, "That the house when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." Which did denote that the church of Christ was to be built, not only in peace, but without noise or confusion, as Isaiah prophesied of him, chap. xlii. 2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street: a bruised reed shall he not break," &c. He was not to conquer with the sword, as the Israelites subdued Ganaan, but to overcome by meekness, and doing good to his enemies, and patiently suffering all injuries from them. And so he taught his followers, as St. Paul says, 2 Tim. ii. 24. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men.—In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves," &c.

And I cannot think but there was some imitation of this peaceable temple of Solomon, in the temple of Janus among the Romans; for that was never to be shut but in time of peace; which happened rarely among them, but three times in all their history. The last was in the reign of Augustus, in which time Christ came into the world, when there was a profound and universal peace: and so it became the Prince of Peace, whose birth was thus proclaimed by the Angels, Luke ii. 14. "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." But to go on:

(14.) Jonah's being three days and nights in the belly of the whale, was a sign of Christ's being so long in the heart of the earth. Christ himself makes the allusion. Matt. xii. 40.

(15.) But as there were several persons, at several times, representing and prefiguring several particulars of the life and death of Christ: so there was one standing and continual representation of him appointed in the person of the High-Priest under the Law; who entering into the holy of holies once in a year, with the blood of the great expiatory sacrifice, and he only, to make atonement for sin, did lively represent our great High-Priest entering into heaven, once for all, with his own blood, to expiate the sins of the whole world. This is largely insisted upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. vii. viii. ix. x.

And our deliverance by the death of Christ is represented, as in a picture, in that ordinance of the Law, that the man-slayer who fled to one of the cities of refuge, (which were all of the cities of the Levites) should not come out thence till the death of the High-Priest, and no satisfaction be taken till then, and then he should be acquitted and “return into the land of his possession.” Num. xxxv. 6, 25, 26, 27, 28.

And I doubt not but the Gentiles had from hence their asylas or temples of refuge for criminals.

(1.) DE. There is a resemblance in these things; but I would not have admitted them as a proof, if you had not supported them, at least most of them, with the authority of the New Testament. And it was not necessary that every one should be named in it; for those that are named are only occasionally; and I must take time to consider of the evidences you have brought for the authority of the New Testament, which you have made full as great, if not greater than the evidences for the Old Testament.

CHR. I may say greater upon this head of Prophecies and Types, because these are no proofs till they are fulfilled; though then they prove the truth of these Prophecies and Types; and so the one confirms the other: but the whole evidence of the Law is not made apparent till we see it fulfilled in the Gospel. For which reason I call the Gospel the strongest proof, not only as to itself, but likewise as to the Law; and the Jews, as much as in them lies, have invalidated this strongest proof for the Old Testament, which is the fulfilling of it in the New. Nay, they have rendered these Prophecies false, which they say were not fulfilled at the time they spake of, and never now can be fulfilled. And as no fact but that of our Christ alone ever had this evidence of Prophecies and Types from the beginning, so never can any other fact have it now while the world lasts.

(2.) DE. Why do you say, Never can have it? For may not God make what fact he pleases, and give it what evidence he pleases?

CHR. But it cannot have the evidence that the fact of Christ has, unless at that distance of time hereafter, as from the beginning of the world to this day. Because God took care that the evidence of Christ should commence from the very beginning, in the promise of him made to Adam, and to be renewed by the Prophets in all the after ages till he should come; and the evidence

of him after his coming (in which I have instanced) and which continues to this day, before it can belong to any other, must have the same compass of time that has gone to confirm this evidence, else it has not the same evidence.

(3.) DE. By this argument the evidence grows stronger the longer it continues, since you say, that the Prophecies of the Scriptures reach to the end of the world, and so will be further and further fulfilling every day.

This is contrary to what one of your doctors has lately advanced, who pretends to calculate the age of evidences*, That in such a time they decay, and in such a time must die. And that the evidence of Christianity having lasted so long, is upon the decay, and must wear out soon, if not supplied by some fresh and new evidence.

CHR. This may be true as to fables which have no foundation : but is that Prophecy I mentioned to you of the dispersion and yet wonderful preservation of the Jews, less evident to you, because it was made so long ago ?

DE. No. It is much more evident for that. If I had lived at the time when those Prophecies were made, I fancy I should not have believed one word of them ; but wondered at the assurance of those who ventured to foretel such improbable and almost impossible things.

And I should have thought the same of what you have told me of your Christ, foretelling the progress of his Gospel, at the first so very slender appearance of it, and by such weak and improbable means, as only suffering and dying for it, which to me would have seemed perfect despair, and a giving up the cause.

I should have thought of them (as of others) who prophesy of things after their time, that they might not be contradicted while they lived.

But my seeing so much of these Prophecies concerning the Jews, and the progress of the Gospel, come to pass so long time after, is the only thing that makes me lay stress upon them, and which makes them seem wonderful to me.

CHR. When the Prophecies shall all be fully compleated at the end of the world, they will then seem strongest of all ; they will then be undeniable ; when Christ shall visibly descend from heaven (in the same manner as he ascended) to execute both what he has promised and threatened. And in the mean time, the Prophecies

* Craig. *Theologiæ Christianæ Principia Mathematica.* 1699.

lose none of their force, but their evidence encreases, as “the light shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

(VIII.) DE. I observe you have made no use of that common topic of the truth and sincerity of the pen-men of the Scriptures, and what interest they could have in setting up these things if they had been false; for this can amount at most but to a probability: and you having produced those evidences which you think infallible, it might seem a lessening of your proof to insist upon bare probabilities; so that I suppose you give that up.

(1.) No, Sir, I give it not up, though I have not made it the chief foundation of my argument; and if it were but a probability, it wants not its force, for it is thought unreasonable to deny a flagrant probability, where there is not as strong a probability on the other side, for then that makes a doubt: but otherwise, men generally are satisfied with probabilities, for that is the greatest part of our knowledge. If we will believe nothing but what carries an infallible demonstration along with it, we must be sceptics in most things in the world; and such were never thought the wisest men.

But besides, a probability may be sooner discerned by some than the infallibility of a demonstration; therefore we must not lay aside probabilities.

But in this case, I think there is an infallible assurance, as infallible as the senses of all mankind; and I suppose you will not ask a greater.

(2.) DE. How can you say that? When the suffering of afflictions, and death itself, is but a probability of the truth of what is told us: because some have suffered death for errors.

CHR. But then they thought them true; and men may be deceived in their judgments, we see many examples of it. But if the facts related be such, as that it is impossible for those who tell them to be imposed upon themselves, or for those to whom they are told to believe them, if not true, without supposing an universal deception of the senses of mankind, then I hope I have brought the case up to that infallible demonstration I promised, and this is the case of the facts related in Holy Scripture. They were told by those who saw them, and did them, and they were told to those who saw them likewise themselves; and the relators appealed to this: so that here could be no deceit.

DE. I grant there is a great difference between errors in opinion, and in fact; and that such facts as are told of Moses and of Christ, could not have passed upon the people then alive, and who were said to have seen them. And I find that both Moses, Christ, and the Apostles, did appeal to what the people they spoke to had seen themselves.

CHR. With this consideration, their patient suffering, even unto death, for the truth of what they taught, will be a full demonstration of the truth of it.

(3.) Add to this, that their enemies who persecuted them, the Romans, as well as Jews, to whom they appealed as witnesses of the facts, did not offer to deny them.

That none of the apostates from Christianity did attempt to detect any falshood in the facts; though they might have had great rewards if they could have done it; the Roman emperors being then persecutors of Christianity, and for three hundred years after Christ. And Julian the emperor, afterwards turned apostate, who had been initiated in the sacra of Christianity, yet could not he detect any of the facts.

(4.) And it was a particular Providence for the further evidence of Christianity, that all the civil governments in the world were against it for the first three hundred years, lest it might be said, (as it is ridiculously in your Amintor) that the awe of the civil government might hinder those who could make the detection,

Now, Sir, to apply all that we have said, I desire you would compare these evidences I have brought for Christianity, with those that are pleaded for any other religion.

There are but four in the world, viz. Christianity, Judaism, Heathenism, and Mahometanism.

(1.) Christianity was the first; for from the first promise of Christ made to Adam during the patriarchal and legal dispensations, all was Christianity in type, as I have shewed.

And as to Moses and the Law, the Jews can give no evidence for that, which will not equally establish the truth of Christ and the Gospel. Nor can they disprove the facts of Christ by any topic, which will not likewise disprove a those of Moses and the Prophets. So that they are hedged in on every side: they must either renounce Moses, or acknowledge Christ.

Moses and the Law have the first five evidences, but they have not the sixth and the seventh, which are the strongest,

This is as to Judaism before Christ came; but since, as it now stands in opposition to Christianity, in favour of any future Messiah, it has none of the evidences at all. On the contrary, their own prophecies and types make against them, for their prophecies are fulfilled, and their types are ceased, and cannot belong to any other Messiah who should come hereafter. They stand now more naked than the Heathens or the Mahometans.

(2.) Next for Heathenism, some of the facts recorded of their gods have the first and second evidences, and some the third, but not one of them the fourth, or any of the other evidences.

But truly and properly speaking, and if we will take the opinion of the Heathens themselves, they were no facts at all, but mythological fables, invented to express some moral virtues or vices, or the history of nature, and power of the elements, &c. As likewise to turn great part of the History of the Old Testament into fable, and make it their own, for they disdained to borrow from the Jews. They made gods of men, and the most vicious too: insomuch that some of their wise men thought it a corruption of youth, to read the history of their gods, whom they represented as notorious liars, thieves, adulterers, &c. though they had some mythology hid under all that.

And as men were their gods, so they made the first man to be father of the gods, and called him Saturn, not begot by any man, but the son of Cœlus and Vesta, that is, of heaven and earth. And his maiming his father with a steel scythe, was to shew how heaven itself is impaired by time, whom they painted with wings and a scythe mowing down all things. And Saturn eating up his own children, was only to express how time devours all its own productions: and his being deposed by Jupiter his son, shews, that time, which wears away all other things, is worn away itself at last.

Several of the heathen authors have given us the mythology of their gods, with which I will not detain you.

They expressed every thing, and worshipped every thing under the name of a god, as the god of sleep, of music, of eloquence, of hunting, drinking, love, war, &c. They had above thirty thousand of them; and in what they told of them, and as they described them, they often traced the sacred story.

Ovid begins his *Metamorphoses* with a perfect poetical version of the beginning of Genesis. *Ante Mare & Tellus*—Then goes on with the history of the creation; the formation of man out of

the dust of the earth, and his being made after the image of God; and to have dominion over the inferior creatures. Then he tells of the general corruption, and the giants before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence; for which all mankind with the beasts and the fowl were destroyed by the universal deluge; except only Deucalion and Pyrrha his wife, who were saved in a boat, which landed them on the top of Mount Parnassus; and that from these two the whole earth was re-peopled. I think it will be needless to detain the reader with an application of this to the history of the creation set down by Moses, of the flood; and the ark wherein Noah was saved, and the earth re-peopled by him, &c.

And Noah was plainly intended likewise in their god Janus, with his two faces, one old, looking backward to the old world that was destroyed; the other young, looking forward to the new world that was to spring from him.

So that even their turning the sacred history into fable, is a confirmation of it. And there can be no comparison betwixt the truths of the facts so attested, as I have shewed, and the fables that were made from them.

(3.) Lastly, as to the Mahometan religion, it wants all the evidences we have mentioned, for there was no miracle said to be done by Mahomet, publicly and in the face of the world, but that only of conquering with the sword. Who saw his Mesra, or Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven in one night, and back in bed with his wife in the morning? Who was present and heard the conversation the moon had with him in his cave? It is not said there was any witness. And the Alcoran, c. vi. excuses his not working any miracles to prove his mission. They say that Moses and Christ came to shew the clemency and goodness of God, to which miracles were necessary: but that Mahomet came to shew the power of God, to which no miracle was needful but that of the sword.

(1.) And his Alcoran is a rhapsody of stuff, without head or tail, one would think wrote by a madman, with ridiculous titles, as the chapter of the Cow, of the Spider, &c.

And their legends are much more senseless than those of the Papists; as of an angel, the distance betwixt whose two hands is seventy thousand days journey. Of a cow's head with horns which have forty thousand knots, and forty days journey betwixt each knot; and others which have seventy mouths, and every

mouth seventy tongues, and each tongue praises God seventy times a day, in seventy different idioms. And of wax candles before the throne of God which are fifty years journey from one end to the other. The Alcoran says, the earth was created in two days, and is supported by an ox which stands under it, upon a white stone, with his head to the east, and his tail to the west, having forty horns, and as great a distance betwixt every horn as a man could walk in a thousand years time.

Then their description of heaven, in a full enjoyment of wine; women, and other like gross sensual pleasures.

(2.) When you compare this with our Holy Scriptures, you will need no argument to make you see the difference. The Heathen orators have admired the sublime of the style of our Scriptures; no writing in the world comes near it, even with all the disadvantage of our translation, which, being obliged to be literal, must lose much of the beauty of it. The plainness and succinctness of the historical part, the melody of the Psalms, the instruction of the Proverbs, the majesty of the Prophets, and, above all, that easy sweetness in the New Testament, where the glory of heaven is set forth in a grave and moving expression, which yet reaches not the height of the subject; not like the flights of rhetoric, which set out small matters in great words. But the holy Scriptures touch the heart, raise expectation, confirm our hope, strengthen our faith, give peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is inexpressible. All which you will experience when you once come to believe; you will then bring forth these fruits of the Spirit, when you receive the word with pure affection, as we pray in our Litany.

(3.) But, Sir, if there is truth in the Alcoran, then the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, for the Alcoran says so, and that it was sent to confirm them, even the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament; and it expressly owns our Jesus to be the Messiah. At the end of the fourth chapter it has these words: "The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is a prophet, and an angel of God, his Word and his Spirit, which he sent to Mary." But it gives him not the name of Son of God, for this wise reason, chap. vi. "How shall God have a son, who hath no wives?" Yet it owns Jesus to be born of a pure virgin, without a man, by the operation of the Spirit of God. And in the same chapter this Mahomet acknowledges his own ignorance, and says, "I told you not that I had in my power all the treasures of God, neither

that I had knowledge of the future and past, nor do affirm that I am an angel, I only act what hath been inspired into me; Is the blind like him that seeth clearly?" And after says, "I am not your tutor, every thing hath its time, you shall hereafter understand the truth."

This is putting off, and bidding them expect some other after Mahomet. But our Jesus said, He was our Tutor and Teacher, and that there was none to come after him. Mahomet said he was no angel, but that Jesus was an angel of God. But when God bringeth Jesus into the world, he saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. And he made him Lord of all the angels. Mahomet knew not what was past or to come; but our Jesus knew all things, and what was in the heart of every man, John ii. 24, 25. which none can do, but God only, 1 Kings viii. 39. and foretold things to come to the end of the world. Mahomet had not all the treasures of God; but in Jesus are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. ii. 3, 9.

Again, Mahomet never called himself the Messiah, or the Word, or Spirit of God, yet all these appellations he gives to our Jesus.

There were prophecies of Jesus which we have seen: Were there any of Mahomet? None; except of the "false Christs and false Prophets," which Jesus told should come after him, and bid us beware of them, for that they would deceive many.

(4.) DE. But if Mahomet gave thus the preference to Christ in every thing, and said that his Alcoran was only a confirmation of the Gospel; how came he to set it up against the Gospel, and to reckon the Christians among the unbelievers?

CHR. No otherwise than as other heretics did, who called themselves the only true Christians, and invented new interpretations of the Scriptures. The Socinians now charge whole Christianity with apostacy, idolatry, and polytheism: and the Alcoran is but a system of the old Arianism, ill digested and worse put together, with a mixture of some Heathenism and Judaism; for Mahomet's father was a Heathen, his mother a Jewess, and his tutor was Sergius the Monk, a Nestorian; which sect was a branch of Arianism: these crudely mixed made up the farrago of the Alcoran; but the prevailing part was Arianism; and where

that spread itself in the east, there Mahometanism succeeded, and sprung out of it, to let all Christians see the horror of that heresy! And our Socinians now among us, who call themselves Unitarians, are much more Mahometans than Christians. For except some personal things as to Mahomet, they agree almost wholly in his doctrine; and as such addressed themselves to the Morocco ambassador here in the reign of King Charles II. as you may see in the Preface to my Dialogues against the Socinians, printed in the year 1708. Nor do they speak more honourably of Christ and the Holy Scriptures than the Alcoran does: and there is no error concerning Christ in the Alcoran but what was broached before by the heretics of Christianity; as that Christ did not suffer really but in appearance only, or that some other was crucified in his stead, but he taken up into heaven, as the Alcoran speaks.

So that in strictness, I should not have reckoned Mahometanism as one of the four religions in the world, but as one of the heresies of Christianity. But because of its great name, and its having spread so far in the world, by the conquest of Mahomet and his followers, and that it is vulgarly understood to be a distinct religion by itself, therefore I have considered it as such.

And as to your concern in the matter, you see plainly, that the Alcoran comes in attestation and confirmation of the facts of Christ, and of the Holy Scriptures.

DE. I am not come yet so far as to enter into the disputes of the several sects of Christianity, but as to the fact of Christ and of the Scriptures in general, Mahometanism I see does rather confirm than oppose it.

CHR. What then do you think of Judaism, as it now stands in opposition to Christianity?

DE. Not only as without any evidence, the time prophesied of for the coming of the Messiah being long since past: but all their former evidences turn directly against them, and against any Messiah who ever hereafter should come. As that the scepter should not depart from Judah; that he should come into the second temple; that the sacrifices should cease soon after his death; that David should never want a son to sit upon his throne; that they should be many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, &c. which they do not suppose ever will be the case after their Messiah is come. So that they are witnesses against themselves.

CHR. And what do you think of the stories of the Heathen gods?

DE. I believe them no more than all the stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Nor did the wiser heathens believe them, only such silly people as suck in all the Popish legends without examining.

And to tell you the truth, I thought the same of all your stories in the Bible; but I will take time to examine those proofs you have given me.

For we Deists do not dispute against Christianity, in behalf of any other religion, of the Jews, or Heathens, or Mahometans, all which pretend to revelation; but we are against all revelation; and go only upon bare nature, and what our own reason dictates to us.

(1.) CHR. What nature dictates, it dictates to all, at least to the most part and the generality of mankind; and if we measure by this, then it will appear a natural notion, that there is necessity of revelation in religion: and herein you have all the world against you from the very beginning. And will you plead nature against all these?

DE. The notion came down from one to another, from the beginning, we know not how.

CHR. Then it was either nature from the beginning, or else, it was from revelation at the beginning; whence the notion has descended through all posterities to this day:

(2.) And there wants not reason for this: for when man had fallen and his reason was corrupted (as we feel it upon us to this day, as sensibly as the diseases and infirmities of the body) was it not highly reasonable that God should give us a law and directions how to serve and worship him? Sacrifices do not seem to be any natural invention: for why should taking away the life of my fellow-creature be acceptable to God, or a worship of him? It would rather seem an offence against him. But as Types of the great and only propitiatory sacrifice of Christ to come, and to keep up our faith in that, the institution given with the revelation of it appears most rational. And that it was necessary, the great defection shews, not only of the Heathens, but of the Jews themselves, who, though they retained the institution, yet in a great measure lost the true meaning and signification of it; and are now

to be brought back to it, by reminding them of the institution and the reason of it.

Plato in his *Alcibiad. ii. de Precat.* has the same reasoning, and concludes, that we cannot know of ourselves what petitions will be pleasing to God, or what Worship to give him: but that it is necessary a Law-giver should be sent from heaven to instruct us; and such a one he did expect; and “O how greatly do I desire to see that man?” says he, and “who is he?” The primitive tradition of the expected Messiah had no doubt come to him, as to many others of the Heathens, from the Jews, and likely from the perusal of their Scriptures.

For Plato goes further, and says, (*de Leg. l. 4.*) That this Law-giver must be more than man; for he observes that every nature is governed by another nature that is superior to it, as birds and beasts by man, who is of a distinct and superior nature. So he infers, that this Law-giver who was to teach man what man could not know by his own nature, must be of a nature that is superior to man, that is, of a divine nature.

Nay, he gives as lively a description of the person, qualifications, life, and death of this divine man, as if he had copied the liiid. of Isaiah: for he says, (*de Repub. i. 2.*) That this just person must be poor and void of all recommendations but that of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproof, and therefore within three or four years after he began to preach, he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last put to death; his word is *Ἀναχνδύλευ θήσεται*, that is, cut in pieces, as they cut their sacrifices.

DE. These are remarkable passages as you apply them; and Plato was three hundred years before Christ.

But I incline to think that these notions came rather from such tradition as you speak of, than from nature; and I can see nothing of nature in sacrifices, they look more like institution, come that how it will.

(3.) CHR. It is strange that all the nations in the world should be carried away from what you call nature; unless you will take refuge among the Hottentots at the Cape of Good Hope, hardly distinguishable from beasts, to shew us what nature left to itself would do! and leave us all the wise and polite world on the side of revelation, either real or pretended; and of opinion that mankind could not be without it: and my business now with you has been to distinguish the real from the pretended,

(4.) DE. By the account you have given, there is but one religion in the world, nor ever was: for the Jewish was but Christianity in type, though in time greatly corrupted: and the Heathen was a greater corruption, and founded the fables of their gods upon the facts of Scripture: and the Mahometan you say is but a heresy of Christianity. So that all is Christianity still.

CHR. It is true God gave but one revelation to the world, which was that of Christ: and as that was corrupted, new revelations were pretended. But God has guarded his revelations with such evidences, as it was not in the power of men or devils to counterfeit or contrive any thing like them. Some bear resemblance in one or two features, in the first two or three evidences that I have produced; but as none reach the fourth, so they are all quite destitute of the least pretence to the remaining four. So that when you look upon the face of divine revelation, and take it altogether, it is impossible to mistake it for any of those delusions which the devil has set up in imitation of it. And they are made to confirm it, because all the resemblance they have to truth, is that wherein they are any ways like it; but when compared with it, they shew as an ill drawn picture, half man half beast, in presence of the beautiful original.

(5.) DE. It is strange, that if the case be thus plain as you have made it, the whole world is not immediately convinced.

CHR. If the seed be never so good, yet if it be sown upon stones or among thorns, it will bring forth nothing. There are hearts of stone, and others so filled with the love of riches, with the cares and pleasures of this life, that they will not see, they have not a mind to know any thing which they think would disturb them in their enjoyments, or lessen their opinion of them, for that would be taking away so much of their pleasure; therefore it is no easy matter to persuade men to place their happiness in future expectations, which is the import of the Gospel. And in pressing this, and bidding the worldly minded abandon their beloved vices, and telling the fatal consequences of them, we must expect to meet not only with their scorn and contempt, but their utmost rage and impatience, to get rid of us, as so many enemies of their lusts and pleasures. This is the cross which our Saviour prepared all his disciples to bear, who were to fight against flesh and blood, and all the allurements of the world: that it is a greater miracle that they have had so many followers in this, than that

they have gained to themselves so many enemies. The world is a strong man, and till a stronger than he come (that is, the full persuasion of the future state) he will keep possession. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. But we are told also, that this faith is the gift of God; for all the evidence in the world will not reach the heart, unless it be prepared (like the good ground) to receive the doctrine that is taught. Till then prejudice will create obstinacy, which will harden the heart like a rock, and cry, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris!* "I will not be persuaded, though I should be persuaded!"

You must consider under this head, too, the many that have not yet heard of the Gospel; and of those that have, the far greater number who have not the capacity or opportunity to examine all the evidences of Christianity, but take things upon trust, just as they are taught. And how many others are careless, and will not be at the pains, though they want not capacity, to enquire into the truth? All these classes will include the greatest part of mankind. The ignorant, the careless, the vicious, and so the obstinate, the ambitious, and the covetous, whose minds the god of this world hath blinded.

But yet in the midst of all this darkness, God hath not left himself without witness, which will be apparent to every diligent and sober enquirer that is willing and prepared to receive the truth.

(6.) Good Sir, let me ask you, though you are of no religion, as you say, but what you call natural; yet would you not think me very brutal, if I should deny that ever there was such a man as Alexander, or Cæsar, or that they did such things? If I should deny all history, or that Homer, or Virgil, Demosthenes, or Cicero, ever wrote such books? Would you not think me perfectly obstinate, seized with a spirit of contradiction, and not fit for human conversation?

And yet these things are of no consequence to me, it is not a farthing as to my interest, whether they are true or false.

Will you then think yourself a reasonable man, if in matters of the greatest importance, even your eternal state, you will not believe those facts which have a thousand times more certain and indisputable evidence? Were there any prophecies of Cæsar or Pompey? Were there any types of them, or public institutions appointed by a Law, to prefigure the great things that they should

do? Any persons who went before them, to bear a resemblance of these things, and bid us expect that great event? Was there a general expectation in the world of their coming, before or at the time when they came? And of what consequence was their coming to the world, or to after ages? No more than a robbery committed a thousand years ago!

Were the Greek and Roman histories wrote by the persons who did the facts, or by eye-witnesses? And for the greater certainty were those histories made the standing law of the country? Or were they any more than our Holinshead and Stow, &c.?

Must we believe these, on pain of not being thought reasonable men? And are we then unreasonable and credulous, if we believe the facts of the Holy Bible? which was the standing Law of the people to whom it was given, and wrote or dictated by those who did the facts, with public institutions appointed by them as a perpetual law to all their generations; and which, if the facts had been false, could never have passed at the time when the facts were said to be done: nor for the same reason, if that book had been wrote afterwards; because these institutions (as circumcision, the passover, baptism, &c.) were as notorious facts as any; and that book saying they commenced from the time that the facts were done, must be found to be false, whenever it was trumped up in after ages, by no such institutions being then known. Not like the feasts, games, &c. in memory of the Heathen gods, which were appointed long after those facts were said to be done; and the like institutions may be appointed to-morrow in memory of any falshood said to be done a thousand years ago; and so is no proof at all. And though a legend, or book of stories of things said to be done many years past, may be palmed upon people, yet a book of statutes cannot, by which their causes are tried every day.

Are there such prophecies extant in any prophane history so long before the facts there recorded, as there are in the Holy Scriptures of the coming of the Messiah?

Were there any types or forerunners of the Heathen gods, or Mahomet?

Is there the like evidence of the truth and sincerity of the Greek and Roman historians, as of the penmen of the Holy Scriptures?

Would these historians have given their lives for the truth of all they wrote?

Did they tell such facts only, wherein it was impossible for themselves to be imposed upon, or that they should impose upon others? Nothing but what themselves had seen and heard, and they also to whom they spoke?

Did they expect nothing but persecution and death for what they related? And were they bidden to bear it patiently without resistance? Was this the case of the disciples of Mahomet, who were required to fight and conquer with the sword?

Did any religion ever overcome by suffering, but the Christian only?

And did any exhibit the future state, and preach the contempt of this world, like the Christian?

DE. That is the reason it has prevailed so little. And yet, considering this, it is strange it has prevailed so much.

(7.) But there is one thing yet behind, wherein I would be glad to have your opinion, because I find your Divines differ about it; and that is, how we shall know to distinguish betwixt true and false miracles.

And this is necessary to the subject we are upon. For the force of the facts you alledge ends all in this; that such miraculous facts are a sufficient attestation of such persons being sent of God; and consequently, that we are to believe the doctrine which they taught.

You know we Deists deny any such thing as miracles, but reduce all to nature; yet I confess, if I had seen such miracles as are recorded of Moses and of Christ, it would have convinced me. And for the truth of them we must refer to the evidences you have given. But in the mean time, if there is no rule whereby to distinguish betwixt true and false miracles, there is an end of all the pains you have taken. For if the devil can work such things, as appear miracles to me, I am as much persuaded as if they were true miracles, and wrought by God. And so men may be deceived in trusting to miracles.

The common notion of a miracle is what exceeds the power of nature. To which we say, that we know not the utmost of the power of nature, and consequently cannot tell what exceeds it. Nor do you pretend to know the utmost of the power of spirits, whether good or evil, and how then can you tell what exceeds their power?

I doubt not but you would have thought those to be true miracles which the magicians are said to have wrought in Egypt,

but that Moses is said to have wrought miracles that were superior to them.

CHR. Therefore if two powers contend for the superiority, as here God and the Devil did, the best issue can be is to see them wrestle together, and then we shall soon know which is strongest. This was the case of Moses and the magicians, of Christ and the Devil. There was a struggle, and Satan was plainly overcome.

I confess I know not the power of spirits, nor how they work upon bodies. And by the same reason that a spirit can lift a straw, he may a mountain, and the whole earth, for ought I know; and may do many things which would appear true miracles to me, and so might deceive me. And all I have to trust to in this case, is, the restraining power of God, that he will not permit the devil so to do. And were it not for this, I doubt not but the devil could take away my life in an instant, or inflict terrible diseases upon me, as upon Job.

And I think this consideration is the strongest motive in the world to keep us in a constant dependance upon God, that we live in the midst of such powerful enemies as we can by no means resist of ourselves, and are in their power every minute, when God shall withdraw his protection from us.

And it is in their power likewise to work signs and wonders to deceive us, if God permit. And herein the great power and goodness of God is manifest, that he has never yet permitted the devil to work miracles in opposition to any whom he sent, except where the remedy was at hand, and to shew his power the more, as in the case of Moses and the magicians, &c.

And this is further evident, because God has, at other times, and upon other occasions, suffered the devil to exert his power, as to make fire descend upon Job's cattle, &c. But here was no cause of religion concerned, nor any truth of God in debate.

DE. But your Christ has foretold, Matt. xxiv. 24. that false Christs and false Prophets shall arise, who shall shew great signs and wonders, to deceive, if possible, the very elect. And it is said, 2 Thess. ii. 9. that there shall be a wicked one, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and it is supposed, Deut. xiii. 1, &c. that a false Prophet may give a sign or a wonder, to draw men after false gods. Here then is sign against sign, and wonder against wonder, and which of these shall we believe?

CHR. The first no doubt. For God cannot contradict himself, nor will shew signs and wonders in opposition to that Law which he has established by so many signs and wonders. Therefore in such a case we must conclude, that God has permitted the devil to exert his power, as against Moses and Christ, for the trial of our faith, and to shew the superior power of God more eminently, in overcoming all the power of the enemy.

But, as I said before, we have a more sure word, that is, proof, that even these miracles exhibited to our outward senses, which is the word of prophecy. Let then any false Christ who shall pretend to come hereafter, shew such a book as our Bible, which has been so long in the world (the most ancient book now extant) testifying of him, foretelling the time, and all other circumstances of his coming, with his sufferings and death, and all these prophecies exactly fulfilled in him. And till he can do this, he cannot have that evidence which our Christ has, and he must be a false Christ to me, and all the signs that he can shew, will be but lying wonders to any that is truly established in the Christian faith.

But it may be a trial too strong for those careless ones who will not be at the pains to enquire into the grounds of their religion, but take it upon trust, as they do the fashions, and mind not to frame their lives according to it, but are immersed in the world, and the pleasures of it.

(8.) And it will be a just judgment upon these, that they who shut their eyes against all the clear evidences of the Gospel, should be given up to believe a lye. And the reason is given 2 Thess. ii. 12. because they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

So that I must repeat what I said before, that there is a preparation of the heart (as of the ground) to receive the truth. And where the doctrine does not please, no evidence, how clear soever, will be received. God cannot enter, till mammon be dispossessed. We cannot serve these two masters. He who has a clear sight of heaven, cannot value the dull pleasures of this life; and it is impossible that he who is drowned in sense can relish spiritual things. The love of this world is enmity against God. The first sin was a temptation of sense; and the reparation is to open our eyes to the enjoyment of God. Vice clouds this eye, and

makes it blind to the only true and eternal pleasure. It is foolishness to such a one.

This, this, Sir, is the *remora* that keeps men from christianity. It is not want of evidence, but it is want of consideration. I would not say this to you till I had first gone through all the topics of reason with you, that you might not call it cant. But this is the truth. As David says, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God." And our Saviour says, "If any man do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." And "No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him."

This was the reason why St. John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner to prepare the way for Christ, by preaching of repentance, to fit men for receiving the Gospel.

And they who repented of their sins upon his preaching, did gladly embrace the doctrine of Christ. But they who would not forsake their sins remained obdurate, though otherwise men of sense and learning. As our Saviour told the Priests and Elders, Matt. xxi. 31. "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him."

And when Christ sought to prepare them for his doctrine, by telling them, that they could not serve God and mammon, it is said, Luke xvi. 14. "That when the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard these things, they derided him." But he instructed them in the next verse, (if they would have received it) that "what is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God." And enforced this with the example of the rich man and Lazarus. And said, chap. xviii. 25. "That it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And chap. xiv. 33. that "whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Now take this in the largest sense, that he who is not ready and willing to forsake all, as if he hated them, as Christ said, ver. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother," &c. (that is, when they come in competition with any command of Christ) and "take not his cross and follow me, he cannot be my dis-

“ciple.” How few disciples would he have had in this age! Would all his miracles persuade some to this? The world is too hard for heaven with most men!

Here is the cause of infidelity. The love of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, darken the heart, and like shutters keep out the light of heaven; till they are removed, the light cannot enter. The spirit of purity and holiness will not descend into an heart full of all uncleanness. If we would invite this guest, we must sweep the house, and make it clean.

But this, too, is of God; for he only can make a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us. But he has promised to give this wisdom to those who ask it, and lead a godly life. Therefore ask and you shall have, seek and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you, But do it ardently and incessantly, as he that striveth for his soul. For God is gracious and merciful, long suffering, and of great goodness; and those who come to him in sincerity, he will in no ways cast out. Therefore pray in faith, nothing doubting; and what you pray for, (according to his will) believe that you receive it, and you shall receive it.

To his grace I commend you.

(9.) And with the fulness of the Gentiles, O! that it would please God to take the veil off the heart of the Jews, and let them see that they have been deceived by many false Messiahs since Christ came; so none whom they expect hereafter can answer the prophecies of the Messiah (some of which I have named) and therefore no such can be the Messiah who is prophesied of in their own Scriptures.

And let them see and consider how that fatal curse they imprecated upon themselves, “His blood be upon us and on our children,” has cleaved unto them, beyond any of their former sins, and even repeated idolatry, from which (to shew that it is not the cause of their present dispersion) they have kept themselves free ever since; and for which their longest captivity was but seventy years, and then Prophets were sent to them to comfort them, and assure them of a restoration: but now they have been about seventeen hundred years dispersed over all the earth, without any Prophet, or prospect of their deliverance; that the whole world might take notice of this before unparalleled judgment,

not known to any nation that ever yet was upon the face of the earth! So punished, and so preserved for judgment, and I hope, at last, for a more wonderful mercy! “ For if the casting away
“ of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O
“ the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past
“ finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all
“ things. To whom be glory for ever. Amen.”



A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

ENGLISH CONSTITUTION;

EXTRACTED FROM

A LATE EMINENT WRITER,

ROGER NORTH, ESQ.

AND

APPLICABLE TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

PREFACE.

THE Editor of the following Discourse on the English Constitution, having been witness, for some years past*, to the many dangerous absurdities which have been published in factious News-papers to corrupt the good people of England, and answer the purposes of a party, who have been working secretly and openly in every possible way, to throw things into confusion, and bring about a change of the government, thinks it high time that something should be offered, to shew the public how they are imposed upon, and to furnish them with a few rational principles concerning the nature of civil power, the necessities of society, and the positive laws of their own country. Hence they will soon see that no plan can be made sense of, except that doctrine of allegiance against which they have been taught to clamour; and that "resistance to civil government," asserted on principle, is nothing but the extravagance and nonsense of designing writers, who want to be resisting every thing for their own private ends.

SUPPOSE I desire to trip up a man's heels, and pick his pocket; what can I do better, to keep up my own credit, and promote my own purposes, than publish it to the world, and get it believed, if possible, that the "common rights of humanity" give one man a title

* This discourse was first extracted by an anonymous Editor in the year 1776.

to trip up another man's heels? And if many are persuaded into the same notion, till we are either too strong or too cunning for opposition, then the property of the public is at our disposal; which is the thing we had in view.

WHEN this principle operates in low life, and raises a gang of thieves and house-breakers, the principle itself, and the effects of it are equally detestable. And it ought to be abhorred as much in other cases: for what is every regular government, but a larger sort of house? What is the public revenue, but the pocket of the state? And are there no thieves who want to be breaking into such an house, "while the family is asleep!" Are there not a larger sort of pick-pockets, having the same appetites and principles with those of the common sort, who would plunder the state as freely as the others rifle a pocket? There is, indeed, this difference betwixt the two classes; that the ordinary thief has but little to say, while his brother of high degree turns orator, and with false principles, and insinuating speeches, renders his profession honourable and popular, till a nation is betrayed into its own ruin, and becomes a spectacle of misery to other states, who have been wise enough to provide better for their own security.

EVERY Government ought to be upon its guard against such men, before they have intoxicated the lower order of the people with that enthusiastic notion of natural privilege against positive law, which leads directly to rebellion; and the people should be better informed in due time, lest their ignorance make them a prey to those who labour so industriously to deceive

them. To wean them from that patriotic froth with which they have been so long treated, we must teach them how to examine things by the plain rules of common sense and positive law ; and then they will see how they have been dancing after the unsubstantial delusions of oratory, and discover at last, that there is no liberty without law, no security without obedience.

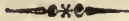
I NEVER met with any discourse, on the subject of allegiance, better calculated to open their eyes than the following ; and therefore would recommend the serious consideration of it to all those who wish well to their country, especially at this time, when so many wish ill to it. It was written by a gentleman eminently skilled in the English law who had studied the constitution with integrity of mind, and has represented it with very great ability. That the government of England, or any part of it, is “ not legally resistible with force,” is the position he lays down ; and he proves it by considering the people’s allegiance pursuant to the positive law of the land, and the rights of the English monarchy, as they are by law expressly and undoubtedly established.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

ENGLISH CONSTITUTION.



IF it be a truth that laws (however originated) bind a people, the people of England are bound not to resist with force the King, or those commissioned by him, in any case, or upon any pretence whatsoever. This is to be alledged as a fundamental principle in arguing from positive law; and hence it flows, and is a known maxim of the English law, that the person of the Sovereign is not punishable nor coercible by force; and in the practicable forms of proceeding, transgressions against this law are judged upon accusations after the form of high treason. This consequence of law, the maintainers of resistance scarce deny; for they seem to go off from, and surmount positive law, supposing a power, which they call “the people,” superior to all law, having it in their hands to reduce laws and law-makers all together; and so they think they argue upon sure grounds. But this eludes the hypothesis, which is, that the people are subject, and bound by the laws: for it is the same as saying that there is no law but in active force, which force is not constant; for sometimes one, and sometimes another division or faction of the people proves to be strongest; and then the laws, if there may be any, are changeable, and that which men call right and wrong, is contingent, as a weather-cock that varies with the air: all which is ridiculous to affirm in discourse. But in a nation that hath established laws, all ques-

tions of right and wrong are referred to executive power, in such methods of determination as the laws have prescribed; that is, by regular process before competent judges, against whom there is no just exception.

But farther, nothing can justify resistance, but what will amount to a just and legal defence upon an indictment of high treason. If so, examine all the ordinary pretensions for resistance, and they will be found wanting. As first, the abuse of royal power. That will not do, for it is a rule of law, that "the King can do no wrong," because all acts of the government against law are nullities; and such have no legal effect, and justify no commissioner or agent whatsoever. Then, next, immediate violence from the person of the King upon a subject, will also fail; for *se defendendo* is no legal plea in case of an inferior officer, much less in treason; for the law against compassing the death of the King, hath no exception. Then, as to personal defects or incapacities, be it in the highest degree, as madness, lunacy, infancy, or negligence, they afford no matter of defence in treason; for whatever the resisters say, the law says there can be no such thing: for if human infirmity in such cases may be alledged, designing people will ever pretend it, to serve the turn of their ambition. In a word, the law owns no mischief to a people in general or particular, so considerable as to be put into the scales against high treason. Littleton's rule, "better a mischief than an inconvenience," sounds oddly; but it hath this very meaning, and is very good law; and the reason is, there can be no law but contingent mischiefs to particulars may, and often do happen; but the consideration of them doth not disable a law that hath a general view. And whoever argues against a law, from a supposition of such mischiefs possible, argues against all law, and for anarchy and confusion. The law hath likewise another rule, which respects the same case; which is *de minimis non curat lex*: and no contingent mischiefs to particular persons are regarded against the general convenience of a law, especially when government, common peace, and protection depends upon it.

These maxims of law are sufficient to answer all the popular reasonings of men, built upon the possibility of particular mischiefs. But all reasoning is out of doors, where there is positive law. None will deny the statute of treasons to be law, and in full force. And then there is a new ground upon which the case stands; so that if there were any former maxims, modifications,

practices, or settlements of power contrary to that, call them covenants, contracts, fundamental principles, or whatever you please; they all sink into and are drowned in that; as latter laws, not consistent with, always repeal former. And it is well 't is so; for there are evidences in history, that before the making of that law, which the lawyers say is but declaratory of what the law was in truth before, there were great stretches, and even *lesa majestas* was construed treason. A farther use shall be made of this statute, which was a vast ease and safety to the people, in some reflections by and by; and in the mean time let it be observed, that it is not fair to allege for answer, that it is not ingenuous to refer to actual process, or course of law, and the consequences of it; because all governments will take care of themselves, and that the laws shall be declared entirely on their side; as if this insisting on positive law were a subterfuge rather than an argument. But such answer cannot be allowed to be just, or any colour: for will not all irregular persons, as well as traitors, viz. felons, and other evil doers, if they may come off so, or if they are too strong for the judge, answer the same thing? why the one more than the other? To object power against the force of positive law, is ridiculous; for without a title to absolute power, there can be no law at all. To temper this, therefore, in England, it is provided by law, that there be proper judges, competent to decide all questions of right and wrong, whether it concern powers or interests, and such as are put under all obligations of duty and oaths to do right according to law. But yet to enforce this reasoning in favour of non-resistance, and bring it to the height of demonstration, let the judges' immediate authority, though that be decisive, be suspended, and the case stated upon universal principles, and reasons at large:

Now the terms *non-resistance* and *passive-obedience*, commonly used in this dispute, are synonymous, and mean one and the same thing; that is, a negation of all active force, whatever the consequence be. *Obedience*, in the common acceptation of the word, sounds active, and therefore doth not well bear such an adjective as *passive*; *non-resistance* is properly *passive*: but common use hath confounded the language, and diverse words or phrases brought to signify one and the same thing; which is only a choosing to suffer rather than obey unlawful commands. And it is very injurious to infer from such a behaviour, that any power

or prerogative, more than is lawful, is thereby recognized; but it is one way, and an effectual one, of flying in the face of an exorbitant power, and a flat contradiction to it. Thence it is inferred, that in all civil concerns, the law is the rule of obedience, whether *active* or (as it is termed) *passive*; only the former belongs to lawful, and the latter to unlawful commands. And there can be no better means of asserting the rights of the people by law, than the disowning unlawful commands by patient suffering. For which reason the *passive obedience men* are the most express defenders of the laws against unbounded prerogative; as was demonstrated by the heroic carriage of some of the enthronised clergy towards the government in the last century.

And here it may not be amiss to observe, that instead of the old way of expression, the laws of this kingdom or nation, his Majesty's laws, the laws of the land, or the common law, some affect to use the word constitution; which in itself is no bad word, and means no other than as before. But it is commonly brought forward with a republican face, as if it meant somewhat excluding, or opposite to the monarchy, and carried an insinuation as of a co-ordination, or coercion of the monarchy: which latter term, viz. the monarchy of England, still implies, as of old, the whole law; as the crown, in all the authentic books is maintained to be *fons justitiæ*; and it is no where to be found that the crown was one thing, and the constitution another; but the true constitution of England is the monarchy as established by law. And so acts of parliament always refer (and anciently more express than now) to the grant and ordination of the crown, with the usual additions respecting the two houses. It is dangerous to vary the language of the law; because those who do not well distinguish, are thereby carried into mistaken notions of the public.

As to precedents, they are not to be received as a rule of legal authority, but when done in quiet and regular times, approved and allowed by a constant usage in succeeding times: for escapes are no precedents. There have been some of this sort; witness the parricide of King Charles the first by Cromwell, who (to go no higher) died in his bed. Which action hath not been allowed a warrantable precedent; but yet wicked men, if permitted to have power, would allege and use it as such. Undue precedents are very dangerous to liberty: for there are more and stronger instances of exorbitant prerogatives, than of republican encroachments; and the argument is as good for the one as the other.

Therefore actions out of course, irregular, and time-serving, should not be received as precedents decisive, in justification of powers. These prejudices being removed, let the case of obedience be stated upon the true frame and œconomy of right in the world, and particularly upon the general or common law of England.

In all governments that ever were or can be, the supreme power, wherever it is lodged, is and must be uncontrollable and irresistible. That is a truth included in the notion of authority or power, for the one being granted, the other follows; as two and two are equal with four, because, in the idea, they are one and the same. Government resistible is no government, and those, who say the contrary, are to be talked with no more than sceptics in philosophy, who pretend to doubt every thing, even of their own essence, which that very doubting demonstrates. So that, in any settled state, the supreme power, whether it resides in one, a few, or many, may not be lawfully resisted, in any case whatsoever, by any coercive force.

In England, the supreme authority is by law lodged in the crown, together with the two houses of parliament, when duly assembled. It is not at all material, whether, or how, it might have been otherwise placed; though it is naturally impossible, that, in England, it can reside in all the people (as hath been vainly pretended to by some democratic cities of old) the people of England being separated too far asunder, ever to be immediately joined in one action. It is enough here, that, by indubitable law and right, the crown with the states of parliament, are to all intents the supreme authority, being what is termed the legislative power, which no subject ought to gainsay or resist. This will surely be granted; for whoever pretended to gainsay or resist an act of parliament, although, by natural possibility, it may be as iniquitous as any action of a single person can be? Lord Coke will have it, that acts of parliament against common justice are void, as (for instance) if an act were past for erecting a judicature to determine *parte inauditâ alterâ*. But this must be understood in conscience and natural reason only, and not by the sentence of the courts of law; else, the acts to vest and divest private estates, and attainders of absentees, and divers others, would run a shrewd risk in Westminster-hall.

It necessarily happens, in the actual administration of government, that by reason the persons invested with power cannot act

all things directly, the business is distributed in divers manners, according to the policy of several states, to answer the ends of government. As for the making, judging, and executing laws for punishing, defending, compelling, resisting, and the like. And these subdivided offices, or branches of power, may be committed to single persons, or bodies of men, as laws have provided; and then all those persons or authorities become parts of the supreme power in their respective provinces. And (without regard to wrong or right) as the whole supreme power is, so are they, in their proper jurisdictions, irresistible by law upon any pretence whatsoever; not allowing any man even liberty of self-preservation. For whoever thought it lawful for one accused, or condemned capitally, knowing himself to be innocent, and grossly abused in the judgment, to kill the judge or jury, or hang up the hangman, to save his own neck? A man kills the bailiff that attacks him with force to take him; it is an offence capital, and he cannot plead *se defendendo*; and the law requires no proof of malice. These considerations reflect strongly upwards, upon the supreme power itself: for if the derivatives, in their offices, may not be resisted on any pretence, how comes the principal, or supreme in the execution of the whole power, to be resistible by force?

But farther, in England (whatever may be elsewhere) the grand distinction of the supreme power is into the legislative and the executive, which latter compriseth all actual coercion and force entirely in itself. As to the former, as the law now stands (for the opinions and modes of speaking, which took place in ancient times are dropt) it is most certain, that in real effect, the two houses of parliament have a co-authority with the crown in making laws; or it may be more agreeable, in other words, to say, a negative voice upon all legislative acts; or a little more, that is a sort of rogation, or power to move for, and give a spring to, new laws by petition, or otherwise as the practice is. So as, in the main, no new law, of any sort, can be made or discharged for taxing, or otherwise, without the formal and actual concurrence of both houses of parliament: and either disseating or non-consenting, no new law is or can be made. And this union of powers, in the making of laws, is that which, in England, is properly the supreme power absolutely and to all intents. The next thing is to consider how it is distributed, that is, between the

crown and the two houses; for there is no power or authority which is not derived from, or under them, or one of them.

And first, it is not found that the two houses, beyond this concurrent power in legislature, claim any proper agency whatsoever in the government. As for judicature in the lords house, it depends on the executive power of the crown, as other courts of justice do. Even private persons have often the like propriety in jurisdiction; and it is the King's justice, though administered by the lords: for the writs of error, that are the foundation of the legal jurisdictions, are returnable *coram rege in parlamento*. And, as to them and the commons, the office of counselling, petitioning, representing, &c. in virtue of the very words, excludes acting: and it is what every private person may, and often hath a right to do. But the houses, either severally or jointly, have this capacity in the highest degree, being the greatest council, and most universal representative that can be called or assembled legally in England. But yet, excepting the share in the legislature and judicature, no acts of the houses, or either of them, are coercive, or will impeach any man at common law for disobedience; and as for matters of privilege, grown into course, the coercion is still (formally) granted by the crown, and an officer of the crown, the serjeant of the mace, assigned to execute the house's orders in matters of privilege. Else, the commons claim no judicature, not so much as power to administer an oath; and in matters of accusation, are petitioners to inform, as the sense of the word *impetitio* is, not unlike a grand inquest of the whole nation. All which matters are mentioned, lest any of these particulars, if omitted, might be mistaken for an authoritative share in the executive government of England.

Then farther it appears, that all the supreme power of the government of England, except only that which is lodged in the two houses of parliament, is to be found in the crown. The general inference from thence is plain and obvious: but to pursue it by steps. There are two conditions of the English government, the one in the sitting, and the other in the vacancy of parliament. The sitting, as to time, place, and continuance (saving the effect of the septennial act), is known to be in the pure direction of the crown; yet considering, that out of parliament, there may want means to petition or advise, *de arduis regni*, it is an act of conscientious trust and justice in the crown to the people in general (the said law apart), to hold frequent Parliaments, and

much more so according to that law, which turns it to a specific right, that the intent of it should be pursued. But in all points whatsoever, saving what has been alleged, the government of England, in and out of parliament, is exactly the same; and none can say, that the crown hath less power of government when the parliament is sitting than in vacation, nor more power in vacation than when sitting.

To obviate an objection, that, in vacancy of parliaments, there is no supreme power *in esse*, because no new laws can be made, without which capacity, the supreme power is imperfect, and, in the fullness of that authority, ceaseth; let it be observed, that a power of positive legislature is not incident to a supreme power, but it is often perfect without any legislative power at all. As in Turkey, according to the maxims of policy there, no power upon earth can alter their laws, for their laws result from the religion of the country; as here no power can alter the doctrines of the Gospel. And, with them, the question is never what should be, but what is the law; and yet there is a supreme power in the person of the Emperor, as must be confessed. And the strains and abuses of ministers there, to serve the turns of power, and the pleasure of great men, against justice and their laws, is no answer to the constitution, which, *in thesi*, is unalterable; and yet there is a supreme power. But to be more plain; if there were no laws at all in a country, but the will and pleasure of a potentate, or some junto, were really and truly the law; that binds every subject in conscience to obedience. Yet even that supreme power is subject to rules, or law; for there is not, nor can there be, any power upon the face of the earth, above, or without law. For where, none are declared, and there is no superior to exact accounts, yet the law of natural justice and equity prevail. And so a despotic ruler is tied up as much to the law, in duty and conscience, as any sub-governor is, who, by his commission, is restricted to rules. But this duty of all governments doth not impeach the notion of supreme, whether it be declared, or rests in the mind by nature. Either is without coercion, and equally obligatory. If coercion be supposed, then the power that coerceth takes the place of supreme: and it is a *pelion* upon *ossa* to set power over power; for that which hath the coercion of others, must be incoercible itself. And supposing that, and no obligation but conscience and duty in the supreme power, where is the difference whether it be guided

by positive and declared law, or by natural justice? All that can be said is, that laws assist the weak capacities of some men in power, by telling them what ought, and what ought not to be done, which their own natural skill might not perhaps have found out. Though I may say there is scarce a sincere person in the world, whom the golden rule, "do as you would be done by," will not direct: so it is corrupt will, and not want of understanding, which often misleads men; and takes place against positive law, as well as against natural justice. So that it returns every way upon the conscience of powers; for if we admit a superior coercion, or in the common phrase, a liberty (with power) to resist, even that may be exercised with as bad a conscience as the other; and then what is got by the bargain?

But it is a most pernicious error to discharge the supreme power of the obligation to justice for conscience sake, as they do, who say acts of the supreme power, or (in the forensical style) legislative acts, or acts of parliament, are always just, and though made in partial cases, are not injurious because absolute. For a legislative or supreme power, wherever it resides, is as much bound to common justice and equity, in every public act, as a private man is obliged to common trust and honesty. And he that says such powers do no injury, though their act is (as in possibility it may be) most unjust and wicked, because they cannot be contradicted, must, at the same time, allow that a private man who breaks a secret trust, or kills his father, there being no evidence to check or convict him, is a very honest man, and hath done no wrong. Wherefore, if the consciences of men were not some security in the general among promiscuous societies, and in the ordinary dealings of the world; the cases of innocent men, who are most apt to rely on it, were very hard. But I dare say, that however open differences make a noise, there is in the world, as bad as it is, more justice among men, upon account of the common obligation of equity and conscience, than from all the process of law and coercion of the magistrate all the world over. And these men, who argue so strongly against all trust; especially that lodged in governors, which is and will be a pure trust as long as the world stands, only shew how little of that principle is to be found in themselves, which they think wholly wanting in others. It is most certain that numbers of men, whenever a public trust is reposed in them, may (I wish I could not as truly say sometimes do) break all the commandments of God, as well

of the first as second table, as any private persons against whom they are chose to be a guard. And to conclude: the having power is so far from an excuse for doing bad things, that it aggravates them; as when dogs, that are to keep, worry the sheep. A common thief has more to say for himself, than an oppressor or murderer by power, who cannot be coerced. All these matters laid together make it plain, that whether there be a legislative power *in esse* or not, there is always a supreme power which commands all the forces of the state, and is by law, as well in the absence as in the presence of the legislative, irresistible with force; and that will fall out to be the case of the crown of England.

These premises will most clearly appear, if we consider that the legislature, whereof the two houses partake, is of such a nature, that resistance with force doth not take place against it. For laws themselves are but the voice or words of power, and have authority to create a duty, but no active force to compel obedience, or to which resistance can be applied; for who can offer to resist a mere sound? When the executive power comes forward with a strong hand, then there is somewhat to resist, but not else. Therefore resistance or obedience, active or passive, relate wholly to the executive power, without which the legislative is weak and ineffectual. Now all the rest of the supreme power of the government of England (except only legislature, or the non-resistible part, wherein only the two houses are sharers) being owned to reside in the crown, it follows that the same necessity, which makes any power irresistible, makes the crown of England irresistible with force, upon any pretence whatsoever; which consequence is so plain, that it need not be enforced with varying the expressions, or with repetitions. And then upon the same account, it follows that, as concerning the passive obedience or non-resistance of the subject with active force (legislature always excepted, as not concerned in the question) the monarchy of England is the supreme power, and ought not to be opposed with force against its force in any case, nor upon any pretence; such opposition being a crime the laws style treason or rebellion; for which the same laws allow no manner of justification.

As to those nice arguers for resistance, who perpetually harp upon the abuse of power, and the sad effects of it, which they would prevent or cure by resistance, they are easily answered. The matter of right and wrong is indeed founded in nature, and

in that quality, a law itself, however regularly enacted, may be (as before hinted) abominable and wicked: that is, the very legislative power, were it the majority of the people (which is not possible), or in select hands, as it ordinarily is, may tyrannize, and offend against all the rules of natural justice, common sense, and equity; for which that power is to answer, as having transgressed and broke their trust: but it is to God only; for else the correctors of them become at that instant the legislative power, and then we are where we were before. Now there is a distinction to be made here, which is between misfortune and injury. For if a subject is a sufferer under a general, however wicked law, he is unfortunate, but not injured; because he can claim no more than the common benefit of the laws of his country. And having, in due form, stood the judgment of the law, he can ask no more; his appeal must be above; there is no power on earth to relieve him. This was the case of Socrates, and we have his example, as well as reasonings, in the report of his case, to confirm what is here maintained. In short, it is absolutely impossible so to order affairs, but that whoever hath power to do right, hath of consequence power to do wrong. And if resistance be introduced upon a supposal (which may be made no less arbitrarily and insincerely than any act of power can be, and commonly is so) of the undue and insincere use of regular powers, it is declaring plainly, that there can be no government nor distributive justice at all in the world.

And to complete the argument, the positive law or statute (which was mentioned before, but not specified as to one article) is absolutely decisive of the question, in the very terms. It is the article in the statute of 25 Edward III. which makes it high treason to levy war. This is an expression so general, that it forbids resistance upon any pretence; for the government is armed, and if opposed at all, must be opposed by arms, that is, in array of war, or (as they say) *more guerrino*. And whatever the cause is, though not directed, perhaps, against the King, but to pull down bad houses, destroy engine looms, and the like popular, and (as they think) meritorious purposes, it is solemnly adjudged to be treason, as levying war within this article. So that resistance with force, which must be by levying war, is prohibited on pain of death by a positive law; which puts the matter past all dispute.

As to the objection, that *passive obedience* or *non-resistance* is a slavish and degenerate principle, it is a mistake; so far from it, it is a principle of liberty and security. For can any man be free and safe from the outrages of oppressive, potent neighbours, who doth not live under a power sufficient to keep the peace, and protect him? The sovereign power is high and remote, and commonly the interest of it, is to be a friend to the *community*. If the abuses, when there are any, fall hard upon the great men who are near it, they are compensated in the share that devolves among them; with which they would be more ready to oppress their inferiors, if somebody were not above them to give protection and redress. And if the lusts and disorders, sometimes incident to power, bring evil upon the people, it is scarce ever so great, but they are amply compensated by the ordinary peace and protection they enjoy. There is much more danger of oppression to a common man from bad neighbours, private enemies, and wrong doers, as also from the cabals at the next door, than from the potency of the government, though it should happen to be none of the best. And it is found that the worst governments are those that have most heads and hands; for the abuses of such are more diffused, and turn to a more general oppression.

In regard to the questions put by some men—As, can it be imagined a nation ever submitted to be tyrannized over by one man? Or is it fit that one man should have it in his power to make all the rest miserable? However impertinent these questions are to the cause, in a just way of reasoning, yet they may be answered by other questions. As, can it be believed, that a people were ever willing, or consented, that thieves, malefactors, and cheats, every where in plenty, should have liberty to ravage and destroy at their pleasure? And will not a people choose rather to be subject to one man's pleasure, upon a fair understanding, who is potent, and can protect them, than be left at large to fight it out continually, in clans and combinations, to gain a little defence and safety? They must answer, if any thing, right: but then, say they, you may change, and have a better government. True, you may change, but seldom comes a better. If they say it is better the government be weak and precarious, because, for fear of themselves, they will do no injury; no, nor yet, (through the same fear) hinder others from doing injury, which is worst of all; and who lives that has not had experience of this? But

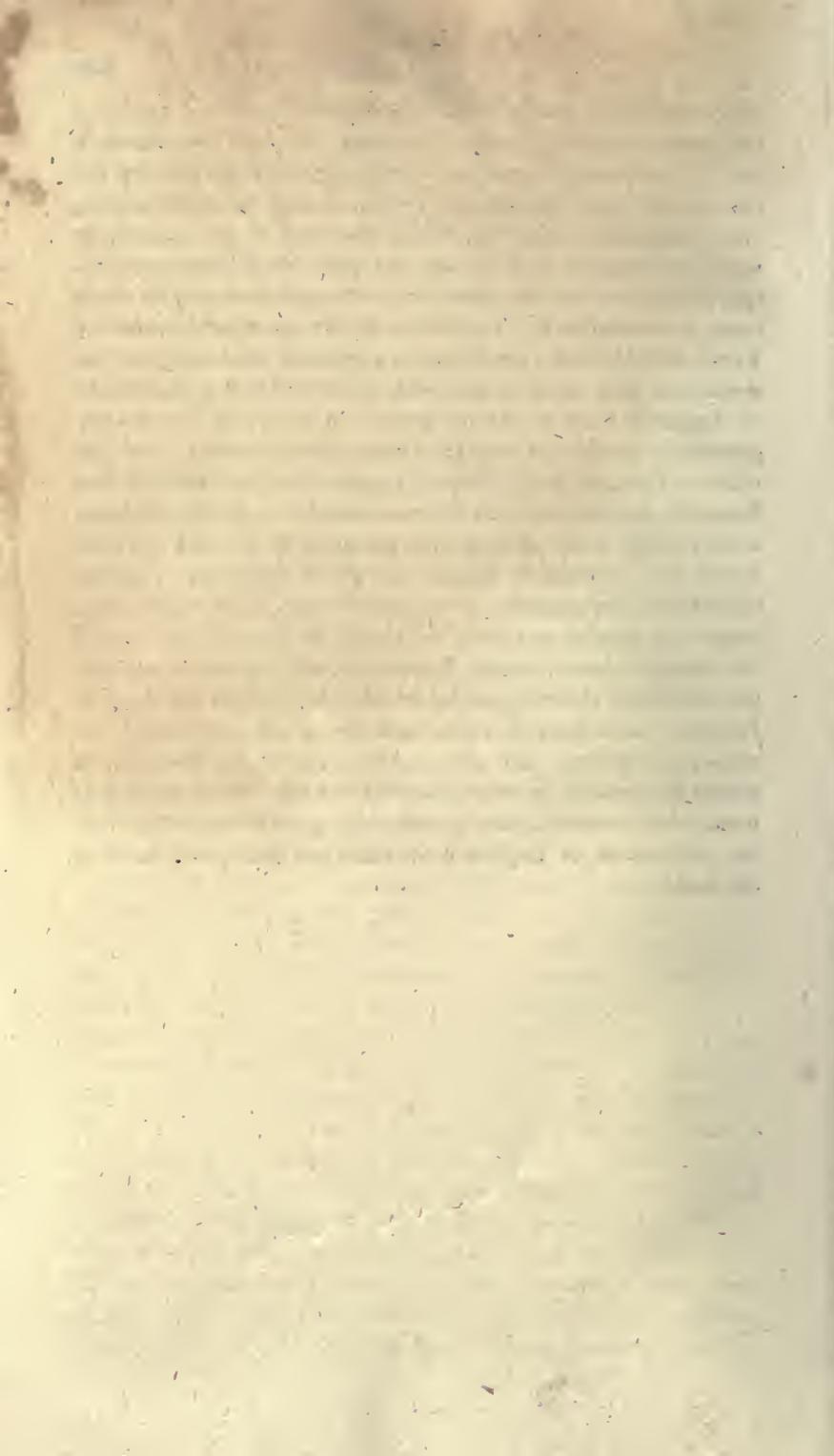
not to refine farther, let it be only observed, that the force of the argument of the resisters lies in magnifying the evils of bad government, and they will have those evils taken in the utmost extremity, though but naturally possible, and in no sort probable, if ever known to have happened in the world. But they say nothing of the evils that attend the want of power in a government, which make a sharper catalogue by much than the other; and they are such as never fail to happen, and, what is worse, affect the whole people wherever they do happen: as all must know by experience, when the nerves of government have been relaxed. No political state is perfect, and the least evil is the best. Public good, so much in these men's mouths, is a cloak which hypocrites always wear; and if you turn it up a little, the nasty self-interest, injustice, and oppression, will appear, that lie lurking under it. Those who have been more than once burnt, which is the case of the English nation, will (it is to be hoped) watch well such fuel. The hardest case of the justest government is, that they are forced to deceive to make people happy; that is, to be quiet, or to take what is good for them. Give me the private man that dares be honest, and the government that dares do justice. Men who live in peace and safety, which are the ordinary fruits of government, are like men in health; then they are not contented, but long for preferment, honour, luxury, and pleasures: but when they fall under diseases, and are in pain, then they would quit all for pure health and ease.

It is not foreign to these speculations, to put in a word in behalf of the English monarchy and government, which hath many advantages to the people, but none more glorious than this; "that all acts of the crown, against law, are mere nullities;" and all who act under them, are obnoxious to the law, and so far from being protected, that they may be questioned and punished by that very power, against whom its own command is no defence or justification. And for this cause, all authentic commands are put in writing, or sealed, or no person, served with such command, can be prosecuted for contempt in not obeying. For the party may know by that, whether it be a legal command, which requires active obedience or not; and then by whose fault it is sent forth, whereby the proper officer may be brought to answer for it. This constitution never was heard of in any State but the English, nor is it extant in force under any other government upon earth: so little danger is there of excesses from the English

monarchy. But if I were debarred this patriarchal privilege, and had my lot in times of disorder, and were put upon a choice of the two, I would certainly, upon the competition, rather yield to one absolute potentate, *tale quale*, who had power sufficient to govern and protect, than to live in perpetual fear and proper guard against injury and oppression from the most cruel of all sorts, that is (not superiors so much as) equals, or rather inferiors. It is an observation which the general experience of ages may vouch, viz. that the calamities which have fallen upon the people of England from the state of the government, have been incomparably more by reason of too little, than of too much power exercised by the Kings; and that by how much nearer the State hath warped towards what some call a common-wealth, by so much hath tyranny got ground, and the true liberty of the people sunk down; whereof great part never emerged to them, no, not after the former government hath been happily restored.

But to conclude with doing right to the cause, I must needs say, that it is not a just balance of interest which always regulates the good or evil consequences of power, but the mere shew, name, opinion, and prejudice, or rather humour of the people, go a great way in it. For it may be observed, that it is not enough to do men good, but they must think and accept of it as such, and also trust their government; or else, whatever the truth is, they will not flourish in numbers and increase of trade and wealth. Therefore it is a most wicked practice of the faction, to labour, as they do, to create misunderstandings and distrust in the people of their government, which must needs tend to the destruction of their welfare and increase. Now, to consider the case rightly, and make a judgment from the extremes, it is almost impossible that prosperity, by increase of people and wealth, should happen under the great Asiatic monarchies (although now, as the world transcends in wickedness, there can be no other than absolute government there); for the people cannot have reason to think themselves safe and secure in the advances they make, and, being careless of that, are ambitious of nothing but power to tyrannize over others, as they themselves are tyrannized over by their superiors; they think of no prosperity but through oppression; and so, by common consent, all are slaves. And this wolfish humour is such, that the governments think their security lies in the destruction and depopulation of provinces. And, to say truth, all defection from common honesty and truth,

which should tie people reasonably together, not only tends to, but makes absolute government necessary. Hence, from the very name of monarchy, men derive a prejudice, as if no security for life or estate were had under it; when it may be made appear, that in monarchic countries, which have laws of government, as well as of property, such as we call mixt, there is more real security than is to be found elsewhere, although there may be much more pretension to it. To instance in the pretended republics of Venice and Holland; the former is a pestilent aristocracy of the worst sort, that is, of a multitude, under which the community of the people have no law or justice on their side, but as they gain the protection of one great man against another. And the other is Holland, which hath no popular elections (essential to a Republic), but burgomasters fill vacancies by a majority of themselves; and so a faction is always prevalent, both in the towns of which the combination consists, and in the stadthouse, whereby the lands of the countries all about are made direct slavish, and sometimes taxed so as not to be worth owning; and all to save the citizen's purses; and all preferments and succession run in a match-making channel and family relation; and yet the name of Republic holds these in credit, and the people are pleased, increase, and thrive. But whatever becomes of the humour and fancies of people, it is certain, that for the true utility of government, when sedition is not permitted to grow too much upon it, the government of England is the safest and best government in the world,



A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

BY GEORGE HORNE, D.D.

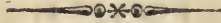
LATE BISHOP OF NORWICH.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.



ROM. xiii. 4.

He is a minister of God to thee for good.

IT is impossible for any one to consider, with attention, the harmony in which all the parts of the natural world conspire to act for the benefit of the whole, without feeling an ardent desire to learn, by whom and in what manner they were first framed and compacted together; how the agents were suited to the patients, and the causes proportioned to the effects; so that the former have ever since operated invariably in the production of the latter; and the result hath been an uniform obedience to the laws originally imposed upon inanimate matter.

A diligent survey of the blessings, for which the moral world is indebted to civil polity, and the due execution of its edicts, must needs excite a curiosity equally earnest, and equally laudable, to enquire into the origin of so useful and necessary an institution; to know at what time, and under whose direction, a machine was constructed, capable, by a variety of well-adjusted springs and movements, of controuling the irregularities of depraved nature, and of ensuring to us, amidst the restless and contradictory passions and affections of sinful men, a quiet possession of our lives and properties.

A "state of nature" hath been supposed by writers of eminence upon this subject, "when men lived in a wild and disorderly manner; and though they had a principle of restraint from religion, and a kind of general law, that exacted punishment of evil doers, yet, as the administration of this law was in common hands, and they had no one arbiter, or judge, with authority over the rest, to put this law, with any regularity, in execution, so, from the excess of self-love, many mutual violences and wrongs would ensue, which would put men upon forming themselves into civil societies, under some common arbiter, for remedy of this disorder."—And it hath been, accordingly, concluded, that "the civil magistrate was called in as an ally to religion, to turn the balance, which had too much inclined to the side of that inordinate self-love."

In the "wild and disorderly state" here supposed, when mankind were mere savages, it is not easy to conceive how they had obtained "a principle of restraint from religion," or "a kind of general law, that exacted punishment of evil doers." And it is no less difficult to imagine what benefit would accrue to them from either; since, as the religion had no priest to teach and enforce it, the law had no magistrate, to promulgate and to execute it. "The administration of this law was in *common hands*;" that is, in the hands of every man who had his own law, canon as well as statute, suited to his present occasion, convenience, or caprice. And what was this, but to be truly and properly destitute both of law and religion?

As this independent state of nature was a state of perfect liberty; and as they, who had the happiness to live under so pure and primitive a dispensation, were, doubtless, too sensible of their happiness, to exchange it readily for government, always liable to degenerate into tyranny and oppression, it is obvious to think, that when the project for "calling in the civil magistrate as an ally to religion" was first proposed, it would not fail to meet with a "very vigorous opposition." "An inordinate self-love," we find, was in possession: and no possessor is with more difficulty ejected. Of the privilege enjoyed by every man, to do without controul what was "right in his own eyes," every man would be exceedingly tenacious; and no one who thought himself, by his superior strength of body, or intellect, better entitled to an ox, or an ass, than his neighbour, could be presently made to see the propriety of his suffering, for the good of the community.

“ The free consent of every individual, we are told, is necessary to be obtained for the institution of civil government.” But upon what plan shall the universal assembly be convened? Or who, in a state of nature, hath authority to convene it? How shall the proceedings of this tumultuary congress of independents be regulated, or the votes of it’s members be collected? And when will all agree to invest some with a power of inflicting pains and penalties, which others cannot but be sensible they shall soon incur?

It is by no means reasonable to imagine, that each person would consent from thenceforth to be determined by a majority of the whole body, which might chance, upon questions of the utmost importance, to exceed the minority, only by a single vote. And that one half of the society should thus domineer over the other half, it would be deemed an infringement on liberty, to which men, born free and equal, might, with great appearance of reason, scruple to subject themselves.

It is indeed sometimes asserted, that “ no man can submit himself to the absolute will of another:” in which case, he certainly cannot submit himself to any government whatsoever; since the legislature, in every government, is absolute, having a power to repeal or dispense with it’s own laws, upon occasions, of which itself is judge.

The reason assigned for the above assertion, “ that no man can submit himself to the absolute will of another,” is this, that “ no man can give that, of which himself is not possessed, namely, the power over his own life.” But how then came any government to be invested with a power of life and death? And what would a government avail, which was not invested with that power? If laws, inflicting capital punishments, are frequently broken, in what a state would the world be, if there were no such laws? Here, then, is a *dignus vindice nodus*; and therefore, *DEUS intersit!* For, without the interposition of some power superior to human, a system of civil polity, calculated to answer, in any degree, the end of its institution, can neither be framed, nor supported.

And the truth is, when we reflect a little farther upon the subject, we cannot but perceive our apprehensions greatly shocked at the supposition, that the wise and good Creator, who formed mankind for society in this world, and designed to train them, by a performance of it’s duties, for a more noble and exalted fellowship with angels in the world to come, should place them, at the

beginning, in the above-mentioned wild and disorderly state of independence, to roam in fields and forests, like the brutes that perish, and to search for law and government, where they were not to be found; that he should give them no rulers, by whom, or how they should be guided and directed, but leave them to choose for themselves, that is, to dispute and fight, and in the end, to be governed by the strongest. One cannot think of multitudes in such a state of equality, with fierce and savage tempers and dispositions, prepared to contend for superiority, but it brings to mind that army, which, according to a pagan fiction, from the teeth of serpents sown in the earth, sprang up together, ready armed for battle, and destroyed each other.

But are these things so? Did God indeed, at the beginning? bring into being, at the same time, a number of human creatures, independent of each other, and turn them uninstructed into the woods, to settle a civil polity by compact, among themselves? We know he did not. He who "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," or that law which his wisdom prescribes to his power; he who appointed a regular subordination among the celestial hierarchies; he who "made a law for the rain and gave his decree to the sea, that the waters should not pass his commandment; he who is the God of peace and order, provided for the establishment and continuation of these blessings among mankind, by ordaining, first in the case of Adam, and then again in that of Noah, that the human race should spring from one common parent.

Unless, therefore, some other origination of mankind be discovered, all equality and independence are at an end. The state of nature was a state of subordination; since, from the beginning, some were born subject to others; and the power of the father, by whatever name it be called, must have been supreme at the first, when there was none superior to it. "To fathers within their private families," saith the judicious Hooker, "nature hath given a supreme power; for which cause we see throughout the world, even from the foundation thereof, all men have ever been taken as lords and lawful kings, in their own houses." And had children the power to choose for themselves, what could they wish for, beyond the care and protection of a parent!

The creation of one pair, the institution of marriage, and the relations flowing from it, do so evidently shew subordination, at the beginning, to have been natural, and not founded on compact

between peers, that two of the ablest advocates for a different hypothesis have, in fact, reduced the supposed compact at last to a *probable* or *tacit* consent of the children to be governed by their father. So that we may fairly look upon this point to be given up. Let us, therefore, go on to trace, as well as we can, the progress of society in the early ages of the world; to point out the manner in which a number of families became united under one civil polity, and governments arose, differing from each other, no less in form, than in extent.

As mankind multiplied, they necessarily found themselves obliged to separate and disperse; which they did accordingly, under their natural rulers the chiefs of families and tribes, who, by reason of their longevity, saw themselves, in a course of years, at the head of a numerous train of descendants and dependents. By these means the earth became gradually filled with *little* governments; and as there was land sufficient for them all, in this state they continued, till, through the workings of corrupted nature, disputes were engendered, which terminating in war, victory at last declared for one of the parties, and the other was obliged to submit. Thus the *larger* governments arose by conquest, first swallowed up the *lesser* into themselves, and then contended with, and overthrew each other.

In the tenth chapter of Genesis, we have an account of the families, tribes, or lesser governments, with which the earth was overspread by the progeny of the sons of Noah. And in the same chapter we read, that, very soon after, by means of Nimrod, a *mighty one*, a warrior, a conqueror, the kingdom, or larger government of Babel began to rear its head, which, in process of time, under different names, became universal; till grown too great to support its own weight, it was subverted by the Persian, as the Persian was by the Grecian, and the Grecian by the Roman, out of which last were formed the empires, kingdoms, and states, at this day subsisting.

Thus it was, that the lesser governments were, from the beginning, founded on the *patria potestas*, and “multiplied as long as there was room enough, or they could agree together; till upon dissensions arising, the stronger, or more fortunate, swallowed up the weaker: and those great ones, again breaking in pieces, dissolved into lesser dominions*.” Power dropped from the hands of one, but was always seized by another, before it could descend to

* Mr. Locke.

the people, who indeed often changed their governors, but were never left to rove at large, without any government at all. Compact had no place, unless either when the lesser states united, as the Greeks did under Agamemnon, against a common enemy, which was only for a time; or else, when several states united, to go and seek fresh settlements, they chose a head, with reserve of privileges to the leaders under him. As to those illegitimate forms of government called *aristocratic*, and *democratic*, they are comparatively of late standing, and were indeed founded on compact, though generally among peers in rebellion, who having broken off from their allegiance to their natural rulers, and thrown the public into convulsions, and being determined to admit no common superior, were obliged, by the necessity of their circumstances, to settle themselves, by compact, into a government, in which a certain mock equality of all was pretended, but a conjunct tyranny of a few was exercised. Orators, haranguing upon liberty, to get themselves a name among the populace, have extolled these forms, as the most accomplished and genuine of all. But if we consider, as an acute writer directs us to do, that "the utmost energy of the nervous style of Thucydides, and the great copiousness and expression of the Greek language seem to sink under the historian, when he attempts to describe the disorders which arose from faction, throughout all the Grecian commonwealths;" that "Appian's history of the Roman civil wars contains the most frightful picture of massacres, proscriptions, and forfeitures, that ever was presented to the world*;" if, at the same time, we recollect the confusion and desolation once occasioned in our own country, by the project of erecting a government upon the plan of those famous democracies, we shall find no temptation to exchange a regular and well constituted monarchy for a REPUBLIC, especially as we must be first thrown into that imaginary political chaos, falsely called a state of nature, before the fair creation can emerge. Like the Israelites of old, we must break off all that is precious and valuable, and cast it into the fire, that from thence may come out this boasted idol, at the feet of which kings and kingdoms are to fall down, and worship.

But if the foregoing be a true representation of facts, it may be asked, how came men into that savage state, in which many

* Mr. Hume.

nations have been, and are at present, and which, if it be not a state of nature, yet doth much resemble that which is described as such, and perhaps gave birth to the ideas that have been entertained concerning it, and the political systems erected upon the supposition of it.

In order satisfactorily to answer this question, it must be remembered, that after the confusion at Babel, and the apostasy of the nations from the worship of the true God to idolatry, the world was gradually peopled by colonies sent forth from places overstocked. These colonies would consist of a mixture of people, often the meanest and lowest, sometimes driven out by conquering enemies, destitute of necessaries, to seek for settlements in distant quarters of the globe. If they fixed in a colder latitude, which rendered the want of clothes and a variety of well prepared food more sensibly felt, and likewise in a place conveniently situated for traffic, they would employ all the understanding of which they were masters, to contrive things first for use, and afterwards for elegance and ornament. But as this was a work of ages; as some imperfect notices of their ruder times would be handed down to their more polite ones; and as they had no writing to record events, there must needs be a wide chasm in their history, between the desertion of their old settlements, and the completion of their new ones. So that when, in their civilized and polished state, they came at their leisure, to look back, and guess at their own rise and progress, they would be lost in the darkness of those times, which preceded their present improvements. They would then imagine a state of nature, in which all were savages, and all were equal; they would fancy themselves to have been *Αυτοχθόνες*, judge of other nations by their own, make the system universal, and suppose all government to have been founded on compact among peers, in that "wild and disorderly state." As their laws, though of late date, were the first *written* accounts of their civilization, they would conclude that, till then, there had been no law, or civil polity in the world; though, in every country, there is a *jus scriptum*, and a *jus non scriptum*, of which the latter is always the oldest, being coeval with the constitution, or even prior to it, having sometimes been brought from the place whence the colony came, and perhaps delivered down from the beginning.

In circumstances like these, we are not to be surprised, if we find the historians, philosophers, and poets, among the Greeks

and Romans believing civil government to have arisen at first by an agreement among independent savages, as some of them imagined, that the world itself was formed by a fortuitous concourse of independent atoms, floating up and down in an infinite void. In constructing these visionary systems, political and physical, they displayed their ingenuity, and we can only lament their want of information with regard to what had happened in former ages, of which they had no means of obtaining more than was derived to them by an imperfect disjointed tradition, disguised in the dress of fable, and destitute of any authority to recommend and gain it credit. They erected the best fabric they could with the materials in their hands, and it would be unreasonable to expect brick from artificers, to whom straw was not given. But in us who have the Scripture history before us, it would be something worse than unreasonable, to over-look the information with which that supplies us, and have recourse to romantic schemes, which owed their being to the want of it.

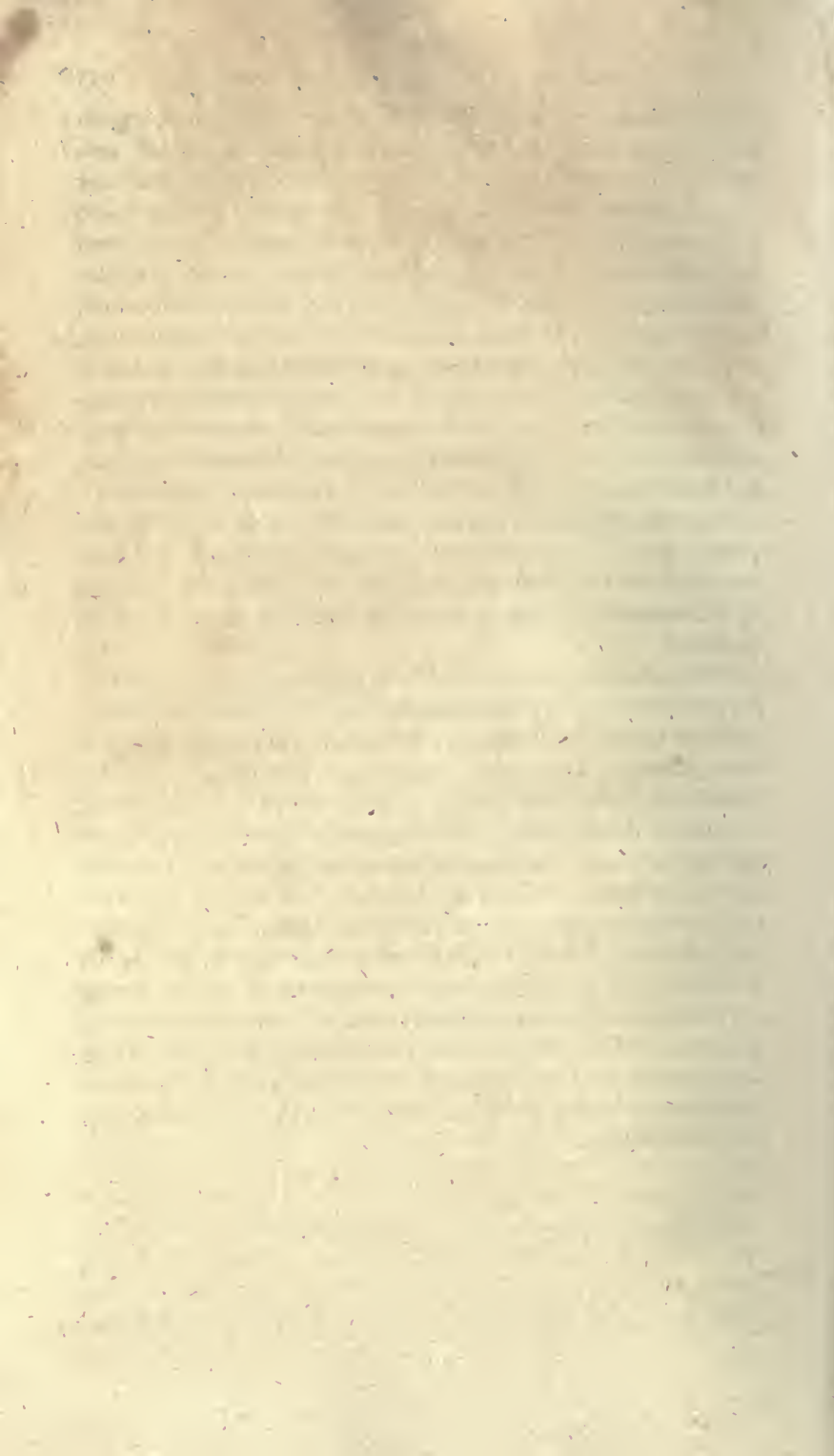
On the other hand, let us suppose a colony, upon it's migration, to have settled itself in a warmer climate, where men would find little or no occasion for clothes, houses, or the preparation of food by fire; and where they were cut off from all communication with the rest of the world. In this situation, they would not concern themselves about the conveniencies, much less the elegancies of life. Naked, or nearly so, living upon the fruits of the earth, and such other provisions as the chase, or the net would procure, and strangers, for want of commerce, to arts and learning, they must continue in the deepest intellectual poverty, retaining only some of those superstitious customs, and diabolical rites, derived from their idolatrous ancestors, and imported with them. And thus degenerating, as they must of necessity do, every day more and more, they would come at last into that deplorable state of ignorance and barbarism, in which some nations are indeed found at this day. But is this a state of *nature*? Was this the state in which the Lord of all things placed the noblest of sublunary beings, the heir of glory and immortality, when his own hands had formed and fashioned him, and he had breathed into him the breath of life? No, surely, it is a state the most *unnatural* in which rational creatures, made in the image of their Creator, can be conceived to exist! A state into which, through

apostacy from revealed truth, and consequent loss of all knowledge, by the just judgment of God upon them, some nations were permitted to fall, and are suffered to continue, in *terrorem* to others. And does a master of reason, an enlightened philosopher, in an enlightened age, send us to learn the first principles of government from Floridans, Brasilians, and Cherokees, because it is said, that they have no kings, but choose leaders, as they want them in time of war? Though such is the force of primeval institution, such the necessity of government, and such the voice of nature concerning it, that even in America, upon its discovery, some nations, as the Mexicans and Peruvians, were found in the state of the *larger* governments which arose by conquest, while others, in the form of the *lesser*, were subject to the chiefs of their respective clans and tribes. Savages themselves cannot live a state of absolute equality and independence. In civilized communities, a ship cannot be navigated, a regiment cannot march, a family cannot be holden together, without a subordination established and preserved. And was all government once dissolved, and the world really reduced to that state, out of which civil polity is supposed to have originally sprung, it would be a scene of uproar and confusion, and a field of blood, till the day of the consummation of all things.

A long and uninterrupted enjoyment of blessings is apt to extinguish in us that gratitude towards the author of them which it ought to cherish and invigorate; and justice is the less regarded, when she maketh these her awful processions through the land, preserving peace and tranquillity in our borders, because she maketh them periodically and constantly. Far different would be our sensations at such times, had sad experience ever taught us what it was to see government unhinged, to want the protection of regal power, and the due execution of laws, by those to whom that power is delegated, "for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well." The course of nature often glides on unobserved, when there are no variations in it; and the sun himself shineth unnoticed, because he shineth every day. "Since the time that God did first proclaim the edicts of his law," says the excellent Hooker, "heaven and earth have hearkened unto his voice, and their labour hath been to do his will. But if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws;

if those principal and mother elements, whereof all the things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch, erected over our heads, should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and, by irregular volubility, turn themselves any way, as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now, as a giant, doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness begin to stand, and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, and her fruits pine away, as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himself, whom these things do all now serve;" and how would he look back upon those benefits, for which, when they were daily poured upon him in boundless profusion, he forgot to be thankful!

While, therefore, we partake, in so eminent a degree, the benefits of civil polity, let us not be unmindful of our great Benefactor. Let these solemn occasions serve to remind us, that there is an intimate connection between religion and government; that the latter flowed originally from the same divine source with the former, and was, at the beginning, the ordinance of the most High; that the state of nature was a state of subordination, not one of equality and independence, in which mankind never did, nor ever can exist; that the civil magistrate is "the minister of God to us for good;" and that to the gracious author of every other valuable gift we are indebted for all the comforts and conveniencies of society, during our passage through this turbulent scene, to those mansions where, as violence is no more committed, punishment is no more deserved; where eternal JUSTICE hath fixed her throne, and is for ever employed in distributing rewards to her subjects, who have been tried and found faithful.



THE
BISHOP OF BANGOR'S

LATE

SERMON,

AND HIS

LETTER TO DR. SNAPE,

IN DEFENCE OF IT,

ANSWERED.

AND THE

DANGEROUS NATURE OF SOME DOCTRINES IN
HIS PRESERVATIVE SET FORTH,

IN A

LETTER TO HIS LORDSHIP,

BY WILLIAM LAW, M. A.

MR. LAW'S FIRST LETTER.

TO THE

BISHOP OF BANGOR.

MY LORD,

THAT your lordship may be prepared to receive, what I here presume to lay before you, with the greater candour, I sincerely profess, that it does not proceed from any prejudice; but from certain reasons, upon which I find myself invincibly obligèd to differ from your lordship in opinion,

To prevent all suspicion of my designing any thing injurious to your lordship's character in this address, I have prefixed what otherwise I should have chosen to conceal, my name to it.

Your lordship is represented as at the head of a cause, where every adversary is sure to be reproached, either as a furious Jacobite, or Popish bigot, as an enemy to the liberty of his country and the Protestant cause. These hard names are to be expected, my lord, from a set of men, who dishonour your lordship with their panegyrics upon your performances; whose praises defile the character they would adorn.

When Dr. Snape, represents your lordship as no friend to the good orders, and necessary institutions of the church; you complain of the ill arts of an adversary, who sets you out in false colours, perverts your words, on purpose to encrease his own imaginary triumphs. But, my lord, in this, Dr. Snape only thinks with those who would be counted your best friends; and would no longer be your friends, but that they conclude, you have declared against the authority of the church. Does your lordship suppose that the T—ds, the H—ks, the B—ts, would be at so much expence of time and labour, to justify, commend,

and enlarge upon your lordship's notions, if they did not think you engaged in their cause? There is not a libertine, or loose thinker in England, but he imagines you intend to dissolve the church as a society, and are ready to offer incense to your lordship for so meritorious a design. It is not my intention to reproach your lordship with their esteem, or to involve you in the guilt of their schemes; but to shew, that an adversary does not need any malice to make him believe you no friend to the constitution of the church, as a regular society, since your greatest admirers every day publish it by necessary construction to the world in print.

After a word or two concerning a passage in your lordship's Preservative, I shall proceed to consider your answer to Dr. Snape. In the 98th page you have these words: "But when you are secure of your integrity before God,—this will lead you (as it ought all of us) not to be afraid of the terrors of men, or the vain words of regular and uninterrupted successions, authoritative benediction, excommunications,—nullity or validity of God's ordinances to the people, upon account of niceties and trifles, or any other the like dreams."

My lord, thus much must be implied here: be not afraid of the terrors of men, who would persuade you of the danger of being in this, or that communion, and fright you into particular ways of worshipping God, who would make you believe such sacraments, and such clergy, are necessary to recommend you to his favour. But these, your lordship affirms, we may contemn, if we are but secure of our integrity.

So that if a man be not a hypocrite, it matters not what religion he is of. This is a proposition of an unfriendly aspect to Christianity: but that it is entirely your lordship's, is plain from what you declare, p. 90. "That every one may find it in his own conduct to be true, that his title to God's favour cannot depend upon his actual being, or continuing in any particular method; but upon his real sincerity in the conduct of his conscience." Again, p. 91: "The favour of God follows sincerity, considered as such, and consequently equally follows every equal degree of sincerity." So that, I hope, I have not wrested your lordship's meaning, by saying, that according to these notions, if a man be not an hypocrite, it matters not what religion he is of. Not only sincere Quakers, Ranters, Muggletonians, and Fifth Monarchy Men, are as much in the favour of God as any

of the Apostles; but likewise sincere Jews, Turks and Deists, are upon as good a bottom, and as secure of the favour of God, as the sincerest Christian.

For your lordship saith, it is sincerity, as such, that procures the favour of God. If it be sincerity, as such, then it is sincerity independent and exclusive of any particular way of worship: and if the favour of God equally follows every equal degree of sincerity, then it is impossible there should be any difference, either as to merit or happiness, between a sincere martyr, and a sincere persecutor; and he that burns the Christian, if he be but in earnest, has the same title to a reward for it, as he that is burnt for believing in Christ.

Your lordship saith, you cannot help it, if people will charge you with * evil intentions and bad views. I intend no such charge: but I wonder your lordship should think it hard that any one should infer from these places, that you are against the interest of the church of England.

For, my Lord, cannot the Quakers, Muggletonians, Deists, Presbyterians, assert you as much in their interest as we can? Have you said any thing for us, or done any thing for us in this Preservative, but what you have equally done for them? Your lordship is ours, as you fill a bishopric; but we are at a loss to discover from this discourse, what other interest we have in your lordship: for you openly expose our communion, and give up all the advantages of it, by telling all sorts of people, if they are but sincere in their own way, they are as much in God's favour as any body else. Is this supporting our interest, my lord?

Suppose a friend of King George should declare it to all Britons whatever, that though they were divided into five thousand different parties, to set up different pretenders; yet if they were but sincere in their designs, they would be as much in the favour of God as those who were most firmly attached to his Majesty; Does your lordship think such a one would be thought any great friend to the government? And, my lord, is not this the declaration you made as to the church of England? Have you not told all parties that their sincerity is enough? Have you said so much as one word in recommendation of our communion? Or, if it was not for your church-character in the title-pages of this discourse, could any one alive conceive what communion

* Answer, p. 46.

you was of? Nay, a reader that was a stranger, would imagine, that he who will allow no difference between communions, is himself of no communion. Your lordship, for ought I know, may act according to the strictest sincerity, and may think it your duty to undermine the foundations of the church. I am only surprized, that you should refuse to own the reasonableness of such a charge. Your lordship hath cancelled all our obligations to any particular communion, upon pretence of sincerity.

I hope, my lord, there is mercy in store for all sorts of people, however erroneous in their way of worshipping God; but cannot believe that to be a sincere Christian, is to be no more in favour of God, than to be a sincere Deist, or sincere destroyer of Christians. It will be allowed, that sincerity is a necessary principle of true religion; and that without it, all the most specious appearances of virtue are nothing worth; but still, neither common sense, nor plain Scripture, will suffer me to think, that when our Saviour was on earth they were as much in the favour of God, who sincerely refused to be his disciples, and sincerely called for his crucifixion, as those who sincerely left all and followed him. If they were, my lord, where is that blessedness of believing so often mentioned in the Scripture? Or, where is the happiness of the Gospel revelation, if they are as well who refuse it sincerely, as those who embrace it with integrity?

Our Saviour declared, that those who believed, should be saved; but those who believed not should be damned. Will your lordship say, that all unbelievers were insincere; or that though they were damned, they were yet in the same favour with God as those who were saved?

The Apostle assures us, that "there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby they can be saved," but Jesus Christ. But your lordship hath found out an atonement, more universal than that of his blood; and which will even make those blessed and happy, who count it an unholy thing. For seeing it is sincerity, as such, that alone recommends us to the favour of God, they who sincerely persecute this name are in as good a way, as those that sincerely worship it. Has God declared this to be the only way to salvation? How can your lordship tell the world that sincerity will save them, be they in what way they will? Is this all the necessity of Christ's satisfac-

tion? Is this all the advantage of the Gospel covenant, that those who sincerely condemn it, are in as good a state without it, as those that embrace it?

My lord, here is no aggravation of your meaning. If sincerity, as such, be the only thing that recommends us to God, and every equal degree of it procures an equal degree of favour; it is a demonstration, that sincerity against Christ is as pleasing to God, as sincerity for him. My lord, this is a doctrine which no words can enough decry. So I shall leave it to consider what opinion St. Paul had of this kind of sincerity. He did not think, when he persecuted the church, though he did it ignorantly, and in unbelief, and out of zeal towards God, that he was as much in the favour of God as when he suffered for Christ. "I am the least," saith he, "of the Apostles, not fit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of Christ." The Apostle does not scruple to charge himself with guilt, notwithstanding his sincerity.

A little knowledge of human nature will teach us, that our sincerity may be often charged with guilt; not as if we were guilty because we are sincere; but because it may be our fault that we are hearty and sincere in such or such ill-grounded opinions. It may have been from some ill conduct of our own, some irregularities, or abuse of our faculties, that we conceive things as we do, and are fixed in such or such tenets. And can we think so much owing to a sincerity in opinions, contracted by ill habits and guilty behaviour? There are several faulty ways, by which people may cloud and prejudice their understandings, and throw themselves into a very odd way of thinking; for some cause or other, "God may send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie." And will your lordship say, that those who are thus sunk into errors, it may be, through their own ill conduct, or as a judgment of God upon them, are as much in his favour as those that love and adhere to the truth? This, my lord, is a shocking opinion, and has given numbers of Christians great offence, as contradicting common sense and plain Scripture; as setting all religion upon the level as to the favour of God.

The next thing that, according to your lordship, "we ought not to be concerned at, is vain words of regular and uninterrupted successions, as niceties, trifles, and dreams." Thus much surely is implied in these words: that no kind of ordination or mission of

the clergy is of any consequence or moment to us. For if the ordination need not be regular, or derived from those who had authority from Christ to ordain, it is plain that no particular kind of ordination can be of any more value than another. For no ordination whatever, can have any worse defects, than as being irregular, and not derived by a succession from Christ. So that if these circumstances are to be looked on as trifles and dreams; all the difference that can be supposed betwixt any ordinations, comes under the same notion of trifles and dreams; and consequently are either good alike, or trifling alike. So that Quakers, Independents, Presbyterians, according to your lordship, have as much reason to think their teachers as useful to them, and as true ministers of Christ, as those of the episcopal communion have to think their teachers. For if regularity of ordination, and uninterrupted succession be mere trifles and nothing, then all the difference betwixt us and other teachers must be nothing: for they can differ from us in no other respects. So that, my lord, if episcopal ordination, derived from Christ, hath been contended for by the church of England, your Lordship hath in this point deserted her: and you not only give up episcopal ordination, by ridiculing a succession; but likewise by the same argument exclude any ministers on earth from having Christ's authority. For if there be not a succession of persons authorised from Christ to send others to act in his name, then both episcopal and Presbyterian teachers are equally usurpers, and as mere lay-men as any at all. For there cannot be any other difference between the clergy and laity, but as the one hath authority derived from Christ, to perform offices, which the other hath not. But this authority can be no otherwise had, than by an uninterrupted succession of men from Christ, empowered to qualify others. For if the succession be once broke, people must either go into the ministry of their own accord, or be sent by such as have no more power to send others than to go themselves. And, my lord, can these be called ministers of Christ, or received as his ambassadors? Can they be thought to act in his name, who have no authority from him? if so, your lordship's servant might ordain and baptize to as much purpose as your lordship: for it could only be objected to such actions, that they had no authority from Christ. And if there be no succession of ordainers from him, every one is equally qualified to ordain. My lord, I should think it might be granted me, that the administering of a sacrament is an action we have no right to

perform, considered either as men, gentlemen, or scholars, or members of a civil society: who then can have any authority to interpose, but he that has it from Christ? and how that can be had from him, without a succession of men from him, is not easily conceived. Should a private person choose a Lord Chancellor and declare his authority good: would there be any thing but absurdity, impudence, and presumption in it? But why he cannot as well commission a person to act, sign, and seal in the King's name, as in the name of Christ is unaccountable.

My lord, it is a plain and obvious truth, that no man, or number of men, considered as such, can any more make a priest, or commission a person to officiate in Christ's name, as such, than he can enlarge the means of grace, or add a new sacrament for the conveyance of spiritual advantages. The ministers of Christ are as much positive ordinances, as the sacraments; and we might as well think, that sacraments not instituted by him, might be means of grace, as those pass for his ministers, who have no authority from him.

Once more, all things are either in common in the church of Christ, or they are not: if they are, then every one may preach, baptize, ordain, &c. If all things are not thus common, but the administering of the sacrament, and ordination, &c. are offices appropriated to particular persons; then I desire to know, how in this present age, or any other since the Apostles, Christians can know their respective duties, or what they may or may not do, with respect to the several acts of church-communion, if there be no uninterrupted succession of authorized persons from Christ; for till authority from Christ appears, to make a difference between them, we are all alike, and any one may officiate as well as another. To make a jest therefore of the uninterrupted succession, is to make a jest of ordination, to destroy the sacred character, and make all pretenders to it, as good as those that are sent by Christ.

If there be no uninterrupted succession, then there are no authorized ministers from Christ; if no such ministers, then no Christian sacraments; if no Christian sacraments, then no Christian covenant, whereof the sacraments are the stated and visible seals.

My lord, this is all your own: here are no consequences palmed upon you; but the first, plain, and obvious sense of your lordship's words.—And yet, after all, your lordship asks Dr. Snape,

Why all these outcries against you *? Indeed, my lord, you have only taken the main supports of our religion away; you have neither left us priests, nor sacraments, nor church: or, what is the same thing, you have made them all trifles and dreams. And what has your lordship given us in the room of all these advantages? Why, only sincerity; this is the great universal atonement for all. This is that, which, according to your lordship, will help us to the communion of saints hereafter, though we are in communion with any body, or no body, here.

The next thing we are not to be afraid of, are, "the vain words of nullity, and validity of God's ordinances," *i. e.* whether they are administered by a clergyman or a layman. This indeed, I have shewn, was included in what you said about the trifle of uninterrupted succession; but, for fear we should have overlooked it there, you have given it us in express words in the next line.

Your lordship tells Dr. Snape, that you know no confusion, glorious or inglorious, that you have endeavoured to introduce into the church †.

My lord, if I may presume to repeat your own words, lay your hand on your heart, and ask yourself, whether the encouraging all manner of divisions, be not endeavouring to introduce confusion? If there were in England five thousand different sects, has not your lordship persuaded them to be content with themselves; not to value what they are told by other communions; that if they are but sincere, they need not have regard to any thing else? Is not this to introduce confusion? What is confusion, but difference and division? And does not your lordship plainly declare to the world, that there is no need of uniting? That there is no particular way or method that can recommend us more to the favour of God than another? Has your lordship so much as given the least hint, that it is better to be in the communion of the church of England than not? Have you not exposed her sacraments and clergy; and as much as lay in you broke down every thing in her, that distinguishes her from fanatical conventicles? What is there in her as a church that you have left untouched? What have you left in her that can any way invite others into her communion? Are her clergy authorized more than others? For fear that should be thought, you make a regular succession from Christ a trifle. Are her sacraments more regularly administered?

* Answer, p. 40.

† Ibid. p. 47.

Lest that should recommend her, you slight the nullity or validity of God's ordinances. Is there any authority in her laws, which enjoin communion with her? Lest this should be believed, you tell us, that our being or continuing in any particular method (or particular communion) cannot recommend us more to the favour of God than another.

I must observe to your lordship, that these opinions are very oddly put in a "Preservative from ill Principles; or an Appeal to the Consciences and Common Sense of the Laity." Are they to be persuaded not to join with the Nonjurors, because no particular priests, no particular sacraments, or particular communion is any thing but a dream and trifle: and such things as no way recommend us to the favour of God more than others? Are the Nonjurors only thus to be answered? Is the established church thus to be defended? Your lordship indeed has not minced the matter: but I hope the church of England is to be supported upon better principles, or not at all.

If I should tell a person that put a case of conscience to me, that all cases of conscience are trifles, and signify nothing; it would be plain that I had given him a direct answer: but if he had either conscience or common sense, he would seek out a better confessor.

Your lordship tells Dr. Snape, that he saith and unsaith, to the "great diversion of the Roman Catholicicks *." But if your lordship would unsay some things you have said, it would be a greater mortification to them than all that ever you said or writ in your life. To deny the necessity of any particular communion, to expose the validity of sacraments, and rally upon the uninterrupted succession of priests, and pull down every pillar in the church of Christ, is an errand on which Rome hath sent many messengers. And the Papists are no more provoked with your lordship for these discourses, than they were angry at William Penn, the jesuit, for preaching up Quakerism. So long as they rejoice in our divisions, or are glad to see the city of God made a mere Babel, they can no more be angry at your lordship than at your advocates.

Dr. Snape says, you represent the church of Christ as a kingdom, in which Christ neither acts himself, nor hath invested any one else with authority to act for him. At this your lordship

* Answer, p. 26.

cries, p. 22. "Lay your hand upon your heart, and ask, Is this a Christian, human, honest representation of what your own eyes read in my sermon?"

My lord, I have dealt as sincerely with my heart as it is possible; and I must confess, I take the doctor's representation to be Christian and honest. For though you sometimes contend against absolute and indispensable authority; yet is plain, that you strike at all authority; and assert, as the doctor saith, that Christ hath not invested any one on earth with an authority to act for him.

Page 11. You expressly say, "That as to the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation, Christ hath left no visible human authority behind him."

Now, my lord, is not this saying, that he has left no authority at all? For Christ came with no other authority himself: but as to conscience and salvation, he erected a kingdom, which related to nothing but conscience and salvation; and therefore they who have no authority as to conscience and salvation, have no authority at all in his kingdom. Conscience and salvation are the only affairs of that kingdom.

Your Lordship denies, that any one has authority in these affairs; and yet you take it ill to be charged with asserting, that Christ hath not invested any one with authority for him. How can any one act for him, but in his kingdom? How can they act in his kingdom, if they have nothing to do with conscience and salvation, when his kingdom is concerned with nothing else?

Again, p. 16, your lordship saith, that no one of them (Christians) "any more than another, hath authority either to make new laws for Christ's subjects, or to impose a sense upon the old ones; or to judge, censure, or punish the servants of another master, in matters purely relating to conscience."

I can meet with no divine, my lord, either Juror or Nonjuror, high or low, Church-man, or Dissenter, that does not think your lordship has plainly asserted in these passages, what the doctor has laid to your charge, "that no one is invested with authority from Christ to act for him."

Your lordship thinks, this is sufficiently answered, by saying you contend against an absolute authority. You do indeed sometimes join absolute with that authority you disclaim. But, my lord, it is still true, that you have taken all authority from the

church : for the reasons you every where give against this authority, conclude as strongly against any degrees of authority, as that which is truly absolute.

1st, You disown the authority of any Christians over other Christians ; because they are the “servants of another master.” (p. 16.) Now this concludes as strongly against any authority, as that which is absolute : for no one can have the least authority over those that are entirely under another’s jurisdiction. A small authority over another’s servant is as inconsistent as the greatest.

2dly, You reject this authority, because of the objects it is exercised upon, *i. e.* matters purely relating to conscience and salvation. Here this authority is rejected, because it relates to conscience and salvation ; which does as well exclude every degree of authority, as that which is absolute. For if authority and conscience cannot suit together, conscience rejects authority, as such ; and not because there is this or that degree of it. So that this argument banishes all authority.

3dly, Your lordship denies any church-authority ; because Christ doth not “interpose to convey infallibility, to assert the true interpretation of his own laws*.” Now this reason concludes as full against all authority as that which is absolute : for if infallibility is necessary to found an obedience upon in Christ’s kingdom, it is plain, that no body in Christ’s kingdom hath any right to any obedience from others, nor consequently any authority to command it, no members or number of members of it being infallible.

4thly, Another reason your lordship gives against Church authority, is this ; “That it is the taking Christ’s kingdom out of his hands, and placing it in their own.” (p. 14.) Now this reason proves as much against authority in general, or any degrees of it, as that which is absolute. For if the authority of others is inconsistent with Christ’s being King of his own kingdom, then every degree of authority, so far as it extends, is an invasion of so much of Christ’s authority, and usurping upon his right.

The reason likewise which your lordship gives to prove the Apostles not usurpers of Christ’s authority, plainly condemns every degree of authority which any church can now pretend to. “They were no usurpers ; because he then interposed to convey infallibility ; and was in all that they ordained : so that the authority was his in the strictest sense †.” So that where he does

* Sermon, p. 15.

† Answer, p. 38.

not interpose to convey infallibility, there every degree of authority is a degree of usurpation; and consequently, the present church having no infallibility, has no right to exercise the least degree of authority, without robbing Christ of his prerogative.

Thus it plainly appears, that every reason you have offered against church authority concludes with as much strength against all authority as that which is absolute. And therefore Dr. Snape has done you no injury in charging you with the denial of all authority.

There happens, my lord, to be only this difference between your Sermon and the Defence of it, that that is so many pages against church authority, as such; and this is a confutation of the Pope's infallibility. It is very strange that so clear a writer, who has been so long enquiring into the nature of government, should not be able to make himself understood upon it: that your lordship should be only preaching against the Pope, and yet all the Lower House of Convocation should unanimously conceive, that your doctrine therein delivered, tended to subvert all government and discipline in the church of Christ.

And my lord, it will appear from what follows, that your lordship is even of the same opinion yourself; and that you imagined you had banished all authority, as such, out of the church, by those arguments you had offered against an absolute authority. This is plain from the following passage, where you ridicule that which Dr. Snape took to be an authority, though not absolute. When Dr. Snape said, that no church authority was to be obeyed in any thing contrary to the revealed will of God; your lordship triumphs thus: "Glorious absolute authority indeed, in your own account, to which Christ's subjects owe no obedience, till they have examined into his own declarations; and then they obey not this authority, but him*."

Here you make nothing of that authority which is not absolute; and yet you think it hard to be told that you have taken away all church authority. That which is absolute, you expressly deny: and here you say, that which is not absolute, is nothing at all. Where then is the authority you have left? Or how is it that Christ has impowered any one to act in his name?

Your lordship fights safe under the protection of the word absolute; but your aim is at all church power: and your lordship

* Answer, p. 27.

makes too hasty an inference, that because it is not absolute, it is none at all. If you ask where you have made this inference, it is on occasion of the above-mentioned triumph; where your lordship makes it an insignificant authority, which is only to be obeyed so long as it is not contrary to Scripture.

Your lordship seems to think all is lost as to church power; because the doctor does not claim an absolute one; but allows it to be subject to Scripture; as if all authority was absolute, or else nothing at all. I shall therefore consider the nature of this church power, and shew that though it is not absolute, yet it is a real authority, and is not such a mere nothing as your lordship makes it.

An absolute authority, according to your lordship, is, what is to be always obeyed by every individual that is subject to it, in all circumstances. This is an authority that we utterly deny to the church. But, I presume, there may be an authority inferior to this, which is nevertheless a real authority, and is to be esteemed as such; and that for these reasons:

First, I hope it will be allowed me, that our Saviour came into the world with authority. But it was not lawful for the Jews to receive him, if they thought his appearance not agreeable to those marks and characters they had of him in their Scriptures. May I not here say, my lord, "Glorious authority of Christ indeed, to which the Jews owed no obedience, till they had examined their Scriptures; and then they obey, not him, but them!"

Again, the Apostles were sent into the world with authority. but yet, those who thought their doctrines unworthy of God, and unsuitable to the principles of natural religion, were obliged not to obey them. "Glorious authority indeed, of the Apostles, to whom mankind owed no obedience, till they had first examined their own notions of God and religion; and then they obeyed, not the Apostles, but them!"

I hope, my lord, it may be allowed, that the sacraments are real means of grace: but it is certain, they are only conditionally so, if those that partake of them, are endowed with suitable dispositions of piety and virtue. "Glorious means of grace of the sacraments which is only obtained by such pious dispositions: and then it is owing to the dispositions, and not the sacraments." Now, my lord, if there can be such a thing as instituted real means of grace, which are only conditionally applied, I cannot

see why there may not be an instituted real authority in the church, which is only to be conditionally obeyed.

Your lordship has written a great many elaborate pages to prove the English government limited; and that no obedience is due to it, but whilst it preserves our fundamentals; and, I suppose, the people are to judge for themselves, whether these are safe or not. Glorious authority of the English government, which is to be obeyed no longer than the people think it their interest to obey it!

Will your lordship say, there is no authority in the English government, because only a conditional obedience is due to it, whilst we think it supports our fundamentals? Why then must the church authority be reckoned nothing at all, because only a rational conditional obedience is to be paid, whilst we think it not contrary to Scripture? Is a limited, conditional government in the state, such a wise, excellent, and glorious constitution? And is the same authority in church such absurdity, nonsense, and nothing at all, as to any actual power?

If there be such a thing as obedience upon rational motives, there must be such a thing as authority that is not absolute, or that does not require a blind, implicit obedience. Indeed, rational creatures can obey no other authority; they must have reasons for what they do. And yet because the church claims only this rational obedience, your lordship explodes such authority as none at all.

Yet it must be granted, that no other obedience was due to the Prophets, or our Saviour and his Apostles: they were only to be obeyed by those who thought their doctrines worthy of God. So that if the church has no authority, because we must first consult the Scriptures before we obey it; neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles had any authority, because the Jews were first to consult their Scriptures, and the Heathen their reason, before they obeyed them. And yet this is all that is said against church authority; that because they are to judge of the lawfulness of its injunctions, therefore they owe it no obedience: which false conclusion, I hope, is enough exposed.

If we think it unlawful to do any thing that the church requires of us, we must not obey its authority. So, if we think it unlawful to submit to any temporal government; we are not to comply. But I hope it will not follow that the government has no authority, because some think it unlawful to comply with it. If

we are so unhappy as to judge wrong in any matter of duty, we must nevertheless act according to our judgments; and the guilt of disobedience either in church or state, is more or less, according as our error is more or less voluntary, and occasioned by our own mismanagement.

I believe I have shewn, first, that all your lordship's arguments against church authority conclude with the same force against all degrees of authority. Secondly, that though church authority be not absolute in a certain sense; yet, if our Saviour and his Apostles had any authority, the church may have a real authority: for neither He nor his Apostles had such an absolute authority as excludes all consideration and examination: which is your notion of absolute authority.

Before I leave this head, I must observe, that in this very answer to Dr. Snape, where you would be thought to have exposed this absolute authority alone, you exclude all authority along with it. You ask the Doctor*, "Is this the whole you can make of it, after all your boasted zeal for mere authority?" You then say, "Why may not I be allowed to say, no man on earth has an absolute authority, as well as you?" My lord, there can be no understanding of this, unless mere authority and absolute authority be taken for the same thing by your lordship.

But, my lord, is not the smallest particle of matter, mere matter? And is it therefore the same as the whole mass of matter? Is an inch of space, because it is mere space, the same as infinite space? How comes it then, that mere authority is the same as absolute authority? My lord, mere authority implies only authority, as a mere man implies only a man: but your lordship makes no difference between this, and absolute authority; and therefore hath left no authority in the church, unless there can be authority, that is not mere authority, i. e. matter, that is not mere matter; or space, that is not mere space.

When the church enjoins matters of indifference, is she obeyed for any reason, but for her mere authority? But your lordship allows no obedience to mere authority; and therefore no obedience, even in indifferent matters.

Thus do these arguments of yours lay all waste in the church: and I must not omit one, my lord, which falls as heavy upon the state, and makes all civil government unlawful. Your words are

* Answer, p. 26.

these, "As the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, He himself is King; and in this it is implied, that He is the sole Law-giver to his subjects, and Himself the sole Judge of their behaviour in the affairs of conscience and salvation." If there be any truth or force in this argument, it concludes with the same truth and force against all authority in the kingdoms of this world. In Scripture we are told, "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men;" (Dan. iv. 17.) "That the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King," (Isa. xxxiii. 22.) Now, if because Christ is King of the church, it must be in this implied, that He is sole Law-giver to his subjects; it is plain to a demonstration, that because God is King and Law-giver to the whole earth, that therefore He is sole Law-giver to his subjects; and consequently, that all civil authority, all human laws, are mere invasions and usurpations upon God's authority, as King of the whole earth.

Is nobody to have any jurisdiction in Christ's kingdom, because He is King of it? How then comes any one to have any authority in the kingdoms of this world, when God has declared himself the Law-giver and King of the whole world? Will your lordship say, that Christ hath left us the Scriptures as the statute laws of his kingdom, to pervert the necessity of after laws? It may be answered, that God has given us reason for our constant guide; which, if it were as duly attended to, would as certainly answer the ends of civil liberty, as the observance of the Scriptures would make us good christians.

But, my lord, as human nature, if left to itself, would neither answer the ends of a spiritual or civil society; so a constant visible government in both, is equally necessary: and I believe, it appears to all unprejudiced eyes, that in this argument, at least, your lordship has declared both equally unlawful.

Your lordship saith*, "The exclusion of the Papists from the throne, was not upon the account of their religion." Three lines after, you say, "I have contended, indeed, elsewhere, that it was their unhappy religion which *alone* made them incapable in themselves, of governing this Protestant nation, by the laws of the land." My lord, I cannot reconcile these two passages. Popery alone, you say, was their incapacity. From which it may be inferred, they had no other incapacity. Yet your lordship

* Answer, p. 25.

saith, they were not excluded upon the account of their religion. A little after, you say, "The ground of their exclusion was not their religion, considered as such, but the fatal, natural, certain effect of it upon themselves to our destruction."

As for instance; your lordship may mean thus: if a man of a great estate dies, he loses his right to his estate; not upon the account of death considered, as such, but for the certain, fatal, natural effect of it upon himself. Or, suppose a person be excluded for being an idiot; it is not for his idiocy, considered as such; but for the certain, fatal, natural effect of it upon himself to our destruction.

My lord, this is prodigious deep: I wish it be clear; or that it be not too refined a notion for common use on this subject. Likewise I do not conceive, my lord, what you can call the fatal, natural, certain effects of any one's religion. I am sure, amongst Protestants, there are no natural, certain effects of their religion upon them; that their practices don't fatally follow their principles; neither is there any demonstrative certainty that a Bishop cannot be against episcopacy.

If the Papists are so unalterably sincere in their religion, that we can prove their certain observation of it, it is pity but they had our principles, and we had their practice. I have not that good opinion of the Papists, which your lordship hath: I believe, several of them sit as loose to their religion as other folks. Does your lordship think, that all Papists are alike? That natural temper, ambition and education, do not make as much difference amongst them, as the same things do amongst us? Are all Protestants loose and libertine alike? Why should all Papists be the same zealots? If not, my lord, then these effects you call fatal, natural and certain, may be not to be depended upon.

Your Lordship knows, that it was generally believed that King Charles the Second was a Papist: but I never heard of any fatal, natural, and certain effects of his religion upon him. All that one hears of it is, that he lived like a Protestant, and died like a Papist. I suppose, your lordship will allow, that several who were lately Papists, are now true Protestants: I desire therefore to know what is become of the fatal, certain, and natural effects of their religion?

My lord, I beg of you to lay your hand again upon your heart, and ask, whether this be strict reasoning? Whether it is possible

in the very nature of the thing, that such fatal, natural and certain effects should follow such a giddy, whimsical, uncertain thing, as human and free choice? My lord, is it neither possible for Papists to change or conceal their religion for interest, or leave it through a conscientious conviction? If the former is impossible, then, according to your lordship, it is the safest religion in the world; because they are all sure of being sincere, and consequently the first favourites of God. If the latter is impossible, then a great many fine sermons and discourses have been written to as wise purposes as if they had been directed to the wind.

I come now to your lordship's definition of prayer, a "calm and undisturbed address to God." It seems very strange, that so great a master of words as your lordship, should pick out two so very exceptionable, that all your lordship's skill could not defend them, but by leaving their first and obvious sense. Who would not take "calm" and "undisturbed" to be very like "quiet" and "unmoved?" Yet your lordship dislikes those expressions. But if these do not give us a true idea of prayer, you have made a very narrow escape, and have given us a definition of prayer, as near to a wrong one as possible.

Prayer chiefly consisteth of confession and petition. Now to be calm, and free from all worldly passions, is a necessary temper to the right discharge of such duties: but why our confession must be so calm, and free from all perturbation of spirit; why our petitions may not have all that fervour and warmth with which either nature or grace can supply, is very surprising.

My lord, we are advised to be dead to the world; and I humbly suppose, no more is implied in it, than to keep our affections from being too much engaged in it; and that a calm, undisturbed, i. e. dispassionate use of the world, is very consistent with our being dead to it. If so, then this calm, undisturbed address to Heaven, is a kind of prayer that is very consistent with our being dead to Heaven.

We are forbid to love the world; and yet no greater abstraction from it is required, than to use it calm and undisturbed. We are commanded to set our affections on things above; and yet, according to your lordship, the same calm, undisturbed temper is enough. According to this, therefore, we are to be affected, or rather unaffected alike, with this, and with the next world, since we are to be calm and undisturbed with respect to both.

The reason your lordship offers for this definition of prayer, is this; because you “* look upon calmness and undisturbedness to be the ornament and defence of human understanding in all its actions.” My lord, this plainly supposes there is no such thing as the right use of our passions: for if we could ever use them to any advantage, then it could not be the ornament of our nature, to be dispassionate alike in all its actions. It is as much the ornament and defence of our nature to be differently affected with things according to their respective differences, as it is to understand or conceive different things according to their real difference. It would be no ornament or credit to us to conceive no difference betwixt a mountain and a mole-hill: and our rational nature is as much disgraced when we are no more affected with great things than with small. It is the essential ornament of our nature, to be as sensibly affected in a different manner with the different degrees of goodness of things, as it is to perceive exactly the different natures or relations of things. Passion is no more a crime, as such, than the understanding is, as such: it is nothing but mistaking the value of objects, that makes it criminal. An infinite good cannot be too passionately desired, nor a real evil too vehemently abhorred. Mere philosophy, my lord, would teach us, that the dignity of human nature is best declared by a pungent uneasiness for the misery of sin, and a passionate warm application to heaven for assistance. Let us now consult the Scripture. St. Paul describes a godly sorrow something different from your lordship's calm and undisturbed temper, in these words: “When ye
 “sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in
 “you! Yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what zeal,
 “yea, what revenge!” (2 Cor. vii. 11.) My lord, I suppose these are not so many other words for “calm” and “undisturbed.” Yet as different as they are, the Apostle makes them the qualities of a godly sorrow; and all this at the expence of that calmness which your lordship terms the ornament of human nature. Dr. Snape pleads for the fervency and ardour of our devotions, from our Saviour's praying more earnestly before his passion.

Your lordship replies, that this can give no direction as to our daily prayers, because it was what our Saviour himself knew nothing of, but this once. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews knew nothing of this way of reasoning; for as an argu-

* Answer, p. 11.

ment for daily patience, he bids us look unto Jesus, who endured the cross, because he died for us, leaving us an example.

Our Saviour, my lord, suffered and died but once: yet is it made a reason for our daily patience, and proposed as an example for us to imitate.

If therefore, my lord, his passion, so extraordinary in itself, and as much above the power of human nature to bear, as the intenseness of his devotions exceeded our capacities for prayer, be yet proposed as an example to us in the ordinary calamities of life, how comes it that his devotion at that time should have no manner of use or direction in it as to our devotions, especially in our distress? How comes it, that his suffering should have so much of example in it, so much to be imitated, but the manner of his devotion then have nothing of instruction, nothing that need be imitated by us? All the reason that is offered, is the singularity and extraordinariness of it, when the same may be said of his passion; yet that is allowed to be an example.

Your lordship is pleased, for the information of your unwary readers, to reason thus upon the place: "If this be the example of our Saviour, to assure us of his will about the temper necessary to prayer, it will follow, that our blessed Lord himself never truly prayed before this time: and yet again, if he prayed more earnestly, it will follow, that he had prayed before; and consequently, that this temper in which he now was, was not necessary to prayer."

My lord, one would think this elaborate proof was against something asserted. Here you have indeed a thorough conquest; but it is over nobody. For did any one ever assert, that such extraordinary earnestness was necessary to prayer? Does Dr. Snape, or any divines, allow of no prayers, except we sweat drops of blood? Will your lordship say, that the necessity of this temper is implied in the quotation of this text, as a direction for prayer? I answer, just as much as we are all obliged to die upon the cross, because his sufferings there are proposed to us as an example:

The plain truth of the matter, my lord, I take to be this: our Saviour's sufferings on the cross were such as no mortal can undergo; yet they are justly proposed as an example to us to bear with patience such sufferings as are within the compass of human nature. His earnest devotion before this passion, far exceeded any fervours which the devoutest of mankind can attain to: yet is it

justly proposed to us as an example, to excite us to be as fervent as we can; and may be justly alleged in our defence, when our warm and passionate addresses to God in our calamities, are condemned as superstitious folly. My lord, must nothing be an example, but what we can exactly come up to? How then can the life of our Saviour, which was entirely free from sin, be an example to us? How could it be said in Scripture, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" Can any one be holy as God is?

My lord, one might properly urge the practice of the primitive christians, who parted with all they had for the support of their indigent brethren, as an argument for charity, without designing to oblige people to part with all they have: and he that should in answer to such an argument, tell the world, that charity is only a calm undisturbed good-will to all mankind, would just as much set forth the true doctrine of charity, as he that defines prayer to be a calm and undisturbed address to heaven, for no other reason, but because no certain degrees of fervour or affection are necessarily required to constitute devotion. My lord, has charity nothing to do with the distribution of alms, because no certain allowance is fixed? Why then must prayer have nothing to do with heat and fervency, because no fixed degrees of it are necessary?

Therefore, my lord, as I would define charity to be a pious distribution of so much of our goods to the poor as is suitable to our circumstances, so I would define prayer an address to heaven, enlivened with such degrees of fervour and intenseness as our natural temper, influenced with a true sense of God, could beget in us.

Your lordship says, you only desire to strike at the root of superstitious folly, and establish prayer in its room; and this is to be effected by making our addresses calm and undisturbed; by which we are to understand, a freedom from heat and passion, as your lordship explains it, by an application to yourself.

If, therefore, any one should happen to be so disturbed at his sins, as to offer a broken and contrite heart to God, instead of one calm and undisturbed, or, like holy David, his soul should be a-thirst for God, or pant after him, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, this would not be prayer, but superstitious folly.

My lord, calmness of temper, as it signifies a power over our passions, is a happy circumstance of a rational nature, but no

farther: when the object is well chosen, there is no danger in the pursuit.

The calmness your lordship hath described, is fit for a philosopher, in his study, who is solving mathematical problems. But if he should come abroad into the world, thus entirely empty of all passion, he would live to as much purpose as if he had left his understanding behind him.

What a fine subject, my lord, would such a one make, who when he heard of plots, invasions, and rebellions, would continue as calm and undisturbed as when he was comparing lines and figures: such a calm subject would scarce be taken for any great loyalist.

Your Lordship in other places, hath recommended an open and undisguised zeal *, and told us such things as ought to alarm the coldest heart †. Sure, my lord, this is something more than calm and undisturbed: and will your lordship, who hath expressed so much concern for this ornament and defence of human understanding, persuade us to part with the least degree of it upon any account?

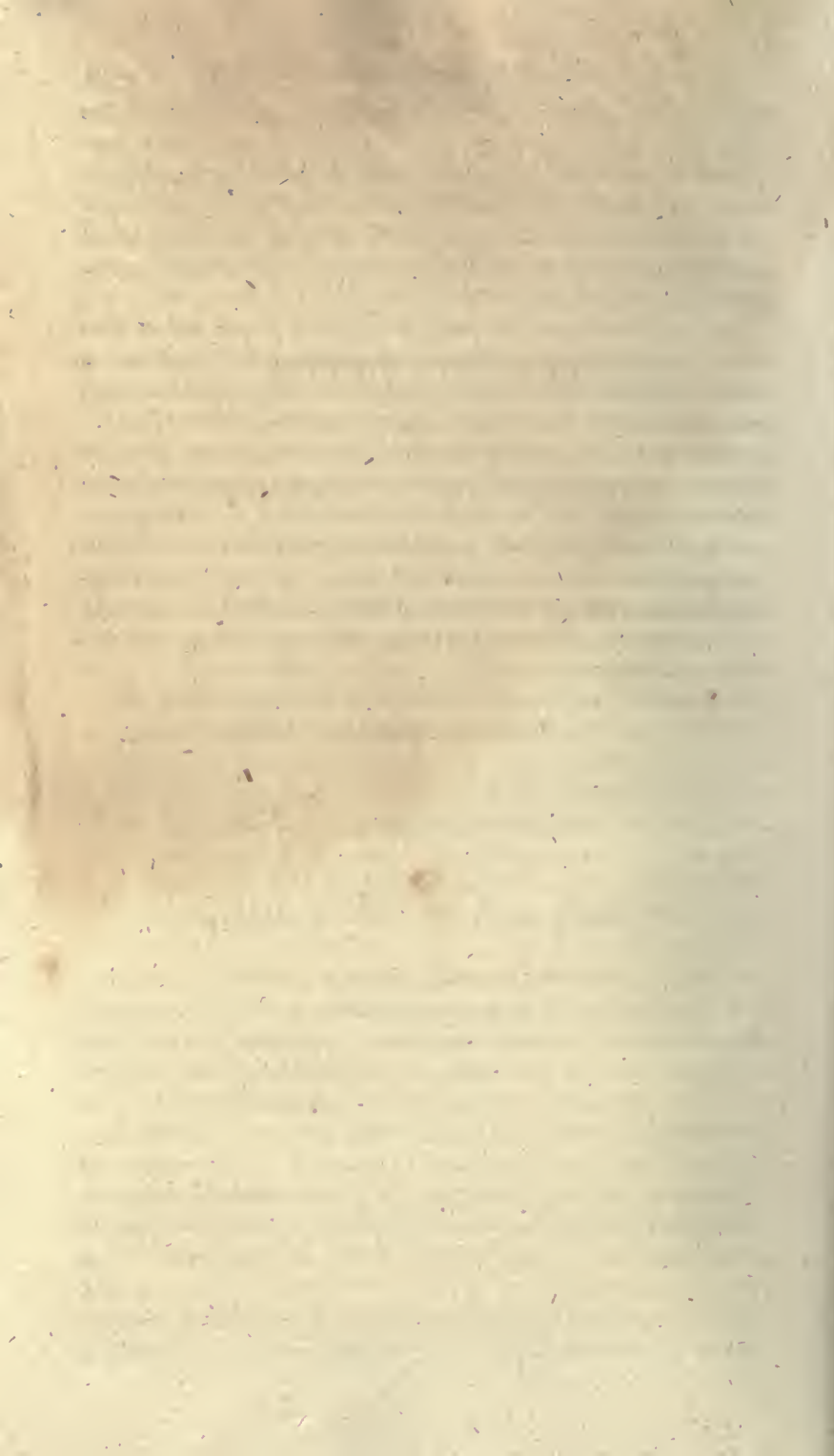
I am, my lord, (with all the respect that is due to your lordship's station and character)

Your most humble and obedient Servant,

WILLIAM LAW.

* Serm. 5 Nov. p. 5.

† Serm. p. 14.



A

SECOND LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF BANGOR,

WHEREIN HIS LORDSHIP'S NOTIONS OF

**BENEDICTION, ABSOLUTION, AND CHURCH
COMMUNION,**

**ARE PROVED TO BE DESTRUCTIVE OF EVERY INSTITUTION
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

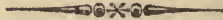
A POSTSCRIPT,

**IN ANSWER TO THE OBJECTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN
MADE AGAINST HIS FORMER LETTER.**

BY WILLIAM LAW, M. A.

MR. LAW'S SECOND LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF BANGOR.

MY LORD,

A JUST concern for truth, and the first principles of the Christian religion, was the only motive that engaged me in the examination of your lordship's doctrines in a former letter to your lordship. And the same motive, I hope, will be thought a sufficient apology for my presuming to give your lordship the trouble of a second letter.

Amongst the vain contemptible things whereof your lordship would create an abhorrence in the laity, are, "the trifles and niceties of authoritative benedictions, absolutions, excommunications*." Again, you say, that "to expect the grace of God from any hands but his own, is to affront him—†." And "that all depends upon God and ourselves; that human benedictions, human absolutions, human excommunications, have nothing to do with the favour of God‡."

It is evident from these maxims, (for your lordship asserts them as such) that whatever institutions are observed in any Christian society, upon this supposition, that thereby grace is conferred through human hands, or by the ministry of the clergy, such institutions ought to be condemned, and are condemned by your lordship, as trifling, useless, and affronting to God.

There is an institution, my lord, in the yet established church of England, which we call Confirmation: it is founded upon the

* Preservative, p. 98.

† P. 89.

‡ P. 101.

express words of Scripture, primitive observance, and the universal practice of all succeeding ages in the church. The design of this institution is, that it should be a means of conferring grace; by the prayer and imposition of the bishop's hands on those who have been already baptized. But yet against all this authority, both divine and human, and the express order of our own church, your lordship teaches the laity, "that all human benedictions are useless niceties; and that to expect God's grace from any hands but his own, is to affront him."

If so, my lord, what shall we say in defence of the Apostles? We read (Acts viii. 14.) that when Philip the deacon had baptized the Samaritans, the Apostles sent Peter and John to them, who having prayed, and "laid their hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost, who before was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

My lord, several things are here out of question; first, that something else, even in the apostolical times, was necessary besides baptism, in order to qualify persons to become complete members of the body, or partakers of the grace of Christ. They had been baptized, yet did not receive the Holy Ghost, till the Apostles hands were laid upon them. 2dly, That God's graces are not only conferred by means of human hands, but of some particular hands, and not others. 3dly, That this office was so strictly appropriated to the Apostles, or chief governors of the church, that it could not be performed by inspired men, though empowered to work miracles, who were of an inferior order; as Philip the deacon. 4thly, That the power of the Apostles for the performance of this ordinance, was entirely owing to the superior degree in the ministry; and not to any extraordinary gifts they were endowed with: for then Philip might have performed it, who was not wanting in those gifts, being himself an evangelist, and worker of miracles: which is a demonstration, that his incapacity arose from his inferior degree in the ministry.

And now, my lord, are all human benedictions niceties and trifles? Are the means of God's grace in his own hands alone? Is it wicked, and affronting to God, to suppose the contrary? How then comes Peter and John to confer the Holy Ghost by the imposition of their hands? How comes it that they appropriate this office to themselves? Is the dispensation of God's grace in his

own hands alone? And yet can it be dispensed to us by the ministry of some persons, and not by that of others?

Were the Apostles so wicked, as to distinguish themselves by a pretence to vain powers, which God had reserved to himself? And which your lordship supposes, from the title of your Preservative, that it is inconsistent with common sense to imagine that God would, or could have communicated to men.

Had any of your lordship's well instructed laity lived in the Apostles days, with what indignation must they have rejected this senseless chimerical claim of the Apostles? They must have said, Why do you, Peter or John, pretend to this blasphemous power? Whilst we believe the Gospel, we cannot expect the grace of God from any hands but his own. You give us the Holy Ghost! You confer the grace of God! Is it not impious to think, that he should make our improvement in grace depend upon your ministry; or hang our salvation on any particular order of clergymen? We know that God is just, and good, and true, and that all depends upon him and ourselves, and that human benedictions are trifles. Therefore whether you Peter, or you Philip, or both, or neither of you lay your hands upon us, we are neither better nor worse; but just in the same state of grace as we were before.

This representation has not one syllable in it, but what is founded in your lordship's doctrine, and perfectly agreeable to it.

The late most pious and learned bishop Beveridge has these remarkable words upon confirmation: "How any bishops in our age dare neglect so considerable a part of their office, I know not; but fear they will have no good account to give of it, when they come to stand before God's tribunal*."

But we may justly, and therefore I hope with decency, ask your lordship, how you dare perform this part of your office? For you have condemned it as trifling and wicked; as trifling, because it is an human benediction; as wicked, because it supposes grace conferred by the hands of the bishop. If therefore any baptized persons should come to your lordship for confirmation, if you are sincere in what you have delivered, your lordship ought, I humbly conceive, to make them this declaration:

* First volume of Sermons.

“ My friends, for the sake of decency and order, I have taken upon me the episcopal character: and, according to custom, which has long prevailed against common sense, am now to lay my hands upon you: but, I beseech you, as you have any regard to the truth of the Gospel, or to the honour of God, not to imagine there is any thing in this action more than an useless empty ceremony: for if you expect to have any spiritual advantage from human benedictions, or to receive grace from the imposition of a bishop's hands, you affront God; and in effect, renounce christianity.”

Pray, my lord, consider that passage in the Scripture, where the Apostle speaks of “ leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and going on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands; and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” (Heb. vi. 12.)

My lord, here it is undeniably plain, that this laying on of hands (which is with us called confirmation) is so fundamental a part of Christ's religion, that it is called one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; and is placed amongst such primary truths as the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

St. Cyprian, speaking of this apostolical imposition of hands, says, “ The same is now practised with us; they who have been baptized in the church, are brought to the presidents of the church, that by our prayer and imposition of hands, they may receive the Holy Ghost, and be consummated with the Lord's seal.”

And must we yet believe, that all human benedictions are dreams, and the imposition of human hands trifling and useless; and that to expect God's graces from them, is to affront him? Though the Scriptures expressly teach us, that God confers his grace by means of certain particular human hands, and not of others; though they tell us this human benediction, this laying on of hands, is one of the first principles of the religion of Christ, and as much a foundation doctrine as the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment; and though every age since that of the Apostles has strictly observed it as such, and the authority of our own church still requires the observance of it?

I come now, my lord, to another sacred and divine institution of Christ's church, which stands exposed and condemned by your

lordship's doctrine; and that is, the ordination of the Christian clergy; where, by means of an human benediction, and the imposition of the bishop's hands, the Holy Ghost is supposed to be conferred on persons towards consecrating them for the work of the ministry.

We find it constantly taught by the Scriptures, that all ecclesiastical authority, and the graces whereby the clergy are qualified and enabled to exercise their functions to the benefit of the church, are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Apostle exhorts the elders "to take heed unto the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers." (Acts xx. 28.) But how, my lord, had the Holy Ghost made them overseers, but by the laying on of the Apostles hands? They were not immediately called by the Holy Ghost; but being consecrated by such human hands as had been authorized to that purpose, they were as truly called by him, and sanctified with grace for that employment, as if they had received an immediate or miraculous commission. So again, St. Paul puts Timothy in mind, "to stir up the gift of God that was in him, by laying on of his hands." 2 Tim. ii. 6.

And now, my lord, if human benedictions be such idle dreams and trifles; if it be affronting to God, to expect his graces from them, or through human hands, do we not plainly want new Scriptures? Must we not give up the Apostles as furious high church prelates, who aspired to presumptuous claims, and talked of conferring the graces of God by their own hands? Was not this doctrine as strange and unaccountable then as at present? Was it not as inconsistent with the attributes and sovereignty of God at that time, to have his graces pass through other hands than his own, as in any succeeding age? Nay, my lord, where shall we find any fathers or councils in the primitive church, but who owned and asserted these powers? They that were so ready to part with their lives, rather than do the least dishonour to God, or the Christian name, yet were all guilty of this horrid blasphemy, in imagining that they were to bless in God's name; and that by the benediction and laying on of the bishop's hands, the graces of the Holy Ghost could be conferred on any persons.

Agreeable to the sense of Scripture and antiquity, our church uses this form of ordination: "The bishop laying his hands on the person's head, saith, Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office

“ and work of a Priest in the church of God, committed unto thee, by the imposition of our hands.” From this form it is plain, first, that our church holds, that the reception of the Holy Ghost is necessary to constitute a person a Christian Priest. 2dly, That the Holy Ghost is conferred through human hands. 3dly, That it is by the hands of a bishop that the Holy Ghost is conferred.

If therefore your lordship is right in your doctrine, the church of England is evidently most corrupt. For if it be dishonourable and affronting to God, to expect his grace from any human hands; it must of necessity be dishonourable and affronting to him, for a bishop to pretend to confer it by his hands. And can that church be any ways defended, that has established such an iniquity by law, and made the form of it so necessary? How can your lordship answer it to your laity, for taking the character or power of a bishop from such a form of words? You tell them it is affronting to God, to expect his grace from human hands; yet to qualify yourself for a bishopric, you let human hands be laid on you, after a manner which directly supposes you thereby to receive the Holy Ghost? Is it wicked in them to expect it from human hands? And is it less so in your lordship, to pretend to receive it from human hands? He that believes it is affronting to God to expect his grace from human hands, must likewise believe, that our form of ordination, which promises the Holy Ghost by the bishop's hands, must be also affronting to God. Certainly he cannot be said to be very jealous of the honour of God, who will submit himself to be made a bishop by a form of words derogatory, upon his own principles, to God's honour.

Suppose your lordship was to have been consecrated to the office of a bishop by these words; “ Take thou power to sustain all things in being given thee by my hands.” I suppose your lordship would think it entirely unlawful to submit to the form of such an ordination. But, my lord, “ receive thou the Holy Ghost,” &c. is as impious a form, according to your lordship's doctrine, and equally injurious to the Eternal Power and Godhead as the other. For if the grace of God can only be had from his own hands, would it not be as innocent in the bishop to say, “ Receive thou power to sustain all things in being,” as to say, “ Receive the Holy Ghost, by the imposition of my hands?” And would not a compliance with either form be equally unlawful? According to

your doctrine, in each of them God's prerogative is equally invaded; and therefore the guilt must be the same.

It may also well be wondered, how your lordship can accept of a character, which is, or ought to be chiefly distinguished by the exercise of that power which you disclaim; as in the offices of confirmation and ordination. For, my lord, where can be the sincerity of saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of our hands," when you declare it affronting to God, to expect it from any hands but his own? Suppose your lordship had been preaching to the laity against owning any authority in the Virgin Mary; and yet should acquiesce in the conditions of being made a bishop in her name, and by recognizing her power: could such a submission be consistent with sincerity? Here you forbid the laity to expect God's grace from any hands but his; yet not only accept of an office, upon supposition of the contrary doctrine, but oblige yourself, according to the sense of the church wherein you are ordained a bishop, to act frequently in direct opposition to your own principles.

So that, I think, it is undeniably plain, that you have at once, my lord, by these doctrines condemned the Scriptures, the Apostles, their martyred successors, the church of England and your own conduct; and have hereby given us some reason (though I wish there was no occasion to mention it) to suspect, whether you, who allow of no other church, but what is founded in sincerity, are yourself really a member of any church.

I shall now proceed to say something upon the consecration of the Lord's Supper; which is as much exposed as a trifle, by your lordship's doctrine, as the other institutions. St. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" My lord, is not this cup still to be blessed? Must there not therefore be such a thing as a human benediction? And are human benedictions to be all despised, though by them the bread and wine become means of grace, and are made the spiritual nourishment of our souls? Can any one bless this cup? If not, then there is a difference between human benedictions; some are authorized by God, and their blessing is effectual; whilst others only are vain and presumptuous. If the prayer over the elements, and the consecration, be only a trifle and a dream; and it be offensive to God to expect they are converted into means of grace by an human benediction; why then did St.

Paul pretend to bless them? Why did he make it the privilege of the church? Or why do we keep up the same solemnity? But if it be to be blessed only by God's ministers, then how can your lordship answer it to God, for ridiculing and abusing human benedictions; and telling the world that a particular order of the clergy are not of any necessity, nor can be of any advantage to them. For if the sacrament can only be blessed by God's ministers; then such ministers are as necessary as the sacraments themselves.

St. Paul says, the cup must be blessed; if you say any one may bless it, then, though you condemn the benedictions of the clergy, you allow of them by every body else: if every body cannot bless it, then you must confess, that the benedictions of some persons are effectual, where others are not.

My lord, the great sin against the Holy Ghost was the denial of his operation in the ministry of our Saviour. And how near does your lordship come to it, in denying the operation of that same spirit, in the ministers whom Christ hath sent? They are employed in the same work that he was. He left his authority with them; and promised that the Holy Spirit should remain with them to the end of the world; that whatsoever they should bind on earth, should be bound in heaven; and whatsoever they should loose on earth, should be loosed in heaven; that whosoever despises them, despises him, and him that sent him. And yet your lordship tells us, we need not to trouble our heads about any particular sort of clergy; that all is to be transacted betwixt God and ourselves; that human benedictions are insignificant trifles.

But pray, what proof has your lordship for all this? Have you any Scripture for it? Has God any where declared, that no men on earth have any authority to bless in his name? Has he any where said, that it is a wicked, presumptuous thing for any one to pretend to it? Has he any where told us, that it is inconsistent with his honour, to bestow his graces by human hands? Has he any where told us that he has no ministers, no ambassadors on earth; but that all his gifts and graces are to be received immediately from his own hands? Have you any antiquity, fathers, or councils on your side? No: the whole tenour of Scripture, the whole concurrent tradition is against you. Your novel doctrine has only this to recommend it to the libertines of the age, who universally give into it, that it never was the opinion of any

church, or church-man. It is your lordship's proper assertion, "That we offend God in expecting his graces from any hands but his own."

Now it is strange, that God should be offended with his own methods; or that your lordship should find us out a way of pleasing him, more suitable to his nature and attributes, than what he has taught us in the Scriptures. I call them his own methods: for what else is the whole Jewish dispensation, but a method of God's Providence; where his blessings and judgments were dispensed by human hands? What is the Christian religion, but a method of salvation, where the chief means of grace are offered and dispensed by human hands? Let me here recommend to your lordship the excellent words of a very learned and judicious prelate on this occasion.

"This will have no weight with any reasonable man, against the censures of the church, or any other ordinance of the Gospel, that they make the intervention of other men necessary to our salvation; since it has been always God's ordinary method, to dispense, his blessings and judgments by the hands of men *."

Your lordship exclaims against your adversaries, as such romantic strange sort of men, for talking of benedictions and absolutions, and of the necessity of receiving God's ordinances from proper hands: yet, my lord, here is an excellent bishop, against whose learning, judgment, and Protestantism there can be no objection; who says, if a person have but the use of his reason, he will have nothing to object to any ordinances of the Gospel, which make the intervention of other men necessary towards the conveyance of them; since that has always been God's ordinary method. The bishop does not say it is necessary a man should be a great divine to acknowledge; so he be but a reasonable man, he will allow it. Yet your lordship is so far from being this reasonable man, that you think your adversaries void both of reason and common sense, for teaching it. You expressly exclude all persons from having any thing to do with our salvation; and say, it wholly depends upon God and ourselves.

You tell us, that "authoritative benediction is another of the terms of art used by your Protestant adversaries; in which they claim a right, in one regular succession, of blessing the

people *." An ingenious author, my lord, (in the opinion of many, if not of most of your friends) calls the consecration of the elements "conjunction †;" your lordship calls the sacerdotal benediction a "term of art;" too plain in intimation, though in more remote and in somewhat softer terms, that in the sense of a certain father of the church, her clergy are little better than so many jugglers.

Your lordship says, "If they only meant thereby to declare upon what terms God will give his blessings to Christians, or to express their own hearty wishes for them, this might be understood." So it might, my lord, very easily; and, I suppose, every body understands that they may do this, whether they be clergy or laity, men or women; for I presume, any one may declare what he takes to be the terms of the Gospel, and wish that others may faithfully observe them. But I humbly presume, my Lord, that the good bishop above-mentioned, meant something more than this, when he spake of ordinances, which make the intervention of other men necessary to our salvation, and of God's dispensing his blessings in virtue of them through their hands.

There is a superstitious custom (in your lordship's account it must be so) yet remaining in most places, of sending for a clergyman to minister to sick persons in imminent danger of death: even those who have abused the clergy all their lives long, are glad to beg their assistance when they apprehend themselves upon the confines of another world. There is no reason, my lord, to dislike this practice, but as it supposes a difference between the sacerdotal prayers and benedictions, and those of a nurse.

We read, my lord, that God would not heal Abimelech, though he knew the integrity of his heart, till Abraham had prayed for him. "He is a prophet," said God, "he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." Gen. xx. 7.

Pray, my lord, was not God just, and good, and true, in the days of Abraham, as he is now? Yet you see, Abimelech's integrity was not available itself. He was to be pardoned by the prayer of Abraham; and his prayer was effectual; and so represented, because it was the prayer of a prophet.

Suppose, my lord, that Abimelech had said with your lordship, "That it is affronting to God, that we should expect his graces

* Page 91.

† Rights of the Christian Church.

from any hands but his own; that all is to be transacted between God and ourselves; and so had rejected the prayer of Abraham, as a mere essay of prophet-craft; he had then acted with as much prudence and piety as your lordship's laity would do, if you could persuade them to despise benedictions and absolutions, to regard no particular sort of clergy, but entirely depend upon God and themselves, without any other assistance whatever.

We read also, that "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him." (Deut. xxxiv. 9.) Was it not as absurd, my lord, in the days of Joshua, for human hands to bless as it is now? Did there not then lie the same objection against Moses, that there does now against the Christian clergy? Had Moses any more natural power to give the spirit of wisdom, &c. by his hands, than the clergy have to confer grace by theirs? They are both equally weak and insufficient for these purposes, of themselves, and equally powerful when it pleases God to make them so.

Again, when Eliphaz and his friends had displeased God, they were not to be reconciled to God by their own repentance, or transact that matter only between God and themselves; but they were referred to apply to Job. "My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept." Job xlii. 8. Might not Eliphaz here have said, shall I so far affront God, as to think I cannot be blessed without the prayers of Job? Shall I be so weak or senseless as to imagine my own supplications and repentance will not save me; or that I need apply to any one but God alone, to qualify me for the reception of his grace?

Again, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Aaron and his sons, saying, on this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless and keep thee," &c. "and I will bless them." Numb. vi. 22.

Again, "The Priests of the sons of Levi shall come near; for them hath the Lord thy God chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord." Deut. xxi. 5.

Now, my lord, this is what we mean by the authoritative administrations of the Christian clergy; whether they be by way of benediction or of any other kind. We take them to be persons whom God has chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in his name. We imagine that our Saviour was a greater Priest and Mediator than Aaron, or any of God's former ministers. We are assured, that Christ sent his Apostles, as his father had sent

him; and that therefore they were his true successors; and since they did commission others to succeed them in their office, by the imposition of hands, as Moses commissioned Joshua to succeed him; the clergy who have succeeded the Apostles, have as divine a call and commission to their work, as those who were called by our Saviour; and are as truly his successors as the Apostles themselves were.

From the places of Scripture above-mentioned, it is evident: and indeed, from the whole tenour of Sacred Writ, that it may consist with the goodness and justice of God to depute men to act in his name, and be ministerial towards the salvation of others; and to lay a necessity upon his creatures of qualifying themselves for his favour, and receiving his graces by the hands and intervention of mere men.

But, my lord, if there be now any set of men upon earth, that are more peculiarly God's ministers than others; and through whose administrations, prayers, and benedictions, God will accept of returning sinners, and receive them to grace; you have done all you can to prejudice people against them; you have taught the laity, that all is to be transacted between God and themselves; and that they need not value any particular sort of clergy in the world.

I leave it to the great Judge and Searcher of hearts, to judge, from what principles, or upon what motives, your lordship has been induced to teach these things; but must declare, that for my own part, if I had the greatest hatred to Christianity, I should think it could not be more expressed, than by teaching what your lordship has publicly taught. If I could rejoice in the misery and ruin of sinners, I should think it sufficient matter of triumph to drive them from the ministers of God, and to put them upon inventing new schemes of saving themselves, instead of submitting to the ordinary methods of salvation appointed by God.

It will not follow from any thing I have said, that the laity have lost their Christian liberty; or that no body can be saved, but whom the clergy please to save; that they have the arbitrary disposal of happiness to mankind. Was Abimelech's happiness in the disposition of Abraham, because he was to be received by means of Abraham's intercession? Or could Job damn Eliphaz, because he was to mediate for him, and procure his reconciliation to God?

Neither, my lord, do the Christian clergy pretend to this despotic empire over their flocks: they do not assume to themselves a power to damn the innocent, or to save the guilty: but they assert a sober and just right to reconcile men to God; and to act in his name, in restoring them to his favour. They received their commission from those whom Christ sent with full authority to send others, and with a promise that he would be with them to the end of the world. From this they conclude, that they have his authority; and that in consequence of it, their administrations are necessary, and effectual to the salvation of mankind; and that none can despise them, but who despise him that sent them; and are as surely out of the covenant of grace, when they leave such his pastors, as when they openly despise, or omit to receive his sacraments.

And what is there in this doctrine, my lord, to terrify the consciences of the laity? What is there here, to bring the prophane scandal of priestcraft upon the clergy? Could it be any ground of Abimelech's hating Abraham, because that Abraham was to reconcile him to God? Could Eliphaz justly have any prejudice against Job, because God would hear Job's intercession for him? Why then, my lord, must the Christian priesthood be so horrid and hateful an institution, because the design of it is to restore men to the grace and favour of God? Why must we be abused and insulted, for being sent upon the errand of salvation, and made ministers of eternal happiness to our brethren? There is a woe due to us if we preach not the Gospel, or neglect those ministerial offices that Christ has entrusted to us. We are to watch for their souls, as those who are to give an account. Why then must we be treated as arrogant priests, or popishly affected, for pretending to have any thing to do in the discharge of our ministry, with the salvation of men? Why must we be reproached with blasphemous claims, and absurd senseless powers, for assuming to bless in God's name; or thinking our administrations more effectual than the office of a common layman?

But farther, to what purpose does your lordship except against these powers in the clergy? from their common frailties and infirmities with the rest of mankind? Were not Abraham and Job and the Jewish priests, men of like passions with us? Did not our Saviour command the Jews to apply to their priests, notwithstanding their personal faults, because they sat in Moses's chair?

Did not the Apostles assure their followers, that they were men of like passions with them? But did they therefore disclaim their mission or apostolical authority? Did they teach that their natural infirmities made them less the ministers of God, or less necessary to the salvation of men? Their personal defects did not make them depart from the claim of those powers they were invested with, or desert their ministry: but indeed, gave St. Paul occasion to say, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, (*i. e.* this authority committed to mere men) "that the excellency of it may "be of God, and not of men." The Apostle happens to differ very much from your lordship. He says, such weak instruments were made use of, that the glory might redound to God. Your lordship says, to suppose such instruments to be of any benefit to us, is to lessen the sovereignty of God, and in consequence, his glory.

Your lordship imagines you have sufficiently destroyed the sacerdotal powers, by shewing that the clergy are only men, and subject to the common frailties of mankind. My lord, we own the charge, and do not claim any sacerdotal powers from our personal abilities, or to acquire any glory to ourselves. But, weak as we are, we are God's ministers; and if we are either afraid or ashamed of our duty we must perish in the guilt. But is a prophet therefore proud, because he insists upon the authority of his mission? Cannot a mortal be God's messenger, and employed in his affairs, but he must be insolent and assuming, for having the resolution to own it? If we are to be reprov'd for pretending to be God's ministers, because we are but men, the reproach will fall upon Providence; since it has pleased God, chiefly to transact his affairs with mankind, by the ministry of their brethren.

Your lordship has not one word from Scripture against these sacerdotal powers; no proof that Christ has not sent men to be effectual administrators of his graces: you only assert, that there can be no such ministers, because they are mere men.

Now, my lord, I must beg leave to say, that if the natural weakness of men makes them incapable of being the instruments of conveying grace to their brethren; if the clergy cannot be of any use or necessity to their flocks, for this reason; then it undeniably follows, that there can be no positive institutions in the Christian church religion, that can procure any spiritual advantages to the members of it; then the sacraments can be no longer any means of grace. For, I hope, no one thinks, that bread

and wine have any natural force or efficacy to convey grace to the soul. The water in baptism has the common qualities of water, and is destitute of any intrinsic power to cleanse the soul, or purify from sin. But your lordship will not say, because it has only the common name of water, that therefore it cannot be a means of grace. Why then may not the clergy, though they have the common nature of men, be constituted by God to convey his graces, and to be ministerial to the salvation of their brethren? Can God consecrate inanimate things to spiritual purposes, and make them the means of eternal happiness? And is man the only creature that he cannot make subservient to his designs? The only being that is too weak for an Omnipotent God to render effectual towards attaining the ends of his grace?

Is it just and reasonable to reject and despise the ministry and benedictions of men, because they are men like ourselves? And is it not as reasonable to despise the sprinkling of water, a creature below us, a senseless and inanimate creature?

Your lordship therefore must either find us some other reason for rejecting the necessity of human administrations, than because they are human; or else give up the sacraments, and all positive institutions along with them.

Surely your lordship must have a mighty opinion of Naaman the Syrian; who, when the prophet bid him go wash in Jordan seven times, to the end he might be clean from his leprosy, very wisely remonstrated, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

This, my lord, discovered Naaman's great liberty of mind; and it is much this has not been produced before, as an argument of his being a free-thinker. He took the water of Jordan to be only water, as your lordship justly observes a clergyman to be only a man: and if you had been with him, you could have informed him, that the washing seven times was a mere nicety and trifle of the prophet; and that since it is God alone who can work miraculous cures, we ought not to think that they depend upon any external means, or any stated number of repeating them.

This, my lord, is the true scope and spirit of your argument: if the Syrian was right in despising the water of Jordan, because it was only water, your lordship may be right in despising any particular order of clergy, because they are but men. Your lordship is certainly as right, or as wrong, as he was.

And now, my lord, let the common sense of mankind here judge, whether, if the clergy are to be esteemed as having no authority, because they are mere men, it does not plainly follow that every thing else, every institution that has not some natural force and power to produce the effects designed by it, is not also to be rejected as equally trifling and ineffectual.

The sum of the matter is this: it appears from many express facts, and indeed from the whole series of God's providence, that it is not only consistent with his attributes, but also agreeable to his ordinary methods of dealing with mankind, that he should substitute men to act in his name, and be authoritatively employed in conferring his grace and favours upon mankind. It appears, that your lordship's argument against the authoritative administrations of the Christian clergy, does not only contradict those facts, and condemn the ordinary method of God's dispensations, but likewise proves the sacraments, and every positive institution of christianity to be ineffectual, and as mere dreams and trifles as the several offices and orders of the clergy.

This, I hope, will be esteemed a sufficient confutation of your lordship's doctrine, by all who have any true regard or zeal for the Christian religion, and only expect to be saved by the methods of divine grace proposed in the Gospel.

I shall now in a word or two set forth the sacredness of the ecclesiastical character as it is founded in the New Testament; with a particular regard to the power of conferring grace, and the efficacy of human benedictions.

It appears therein, that all sacerdotal power is derived from the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour himself took not the ministry upon him, till he had this consecration: and during the time of his ministry, he was under the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost. Through the Holy Spirit he gave commandment to the Apostles whom he had chosen. When he ordained them to the work of the ministry, it was with these words, "Receive the Holy Ghost." Those whom the Apostles ordained to the same function, it was by the same authority: they laid their hands upon the elders, exhorting them to take care of the flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.

Hereby they plainly declared, that however this office was to descend from man to man through human hands, that it was the Holy Ghost which consecrated them to that employment, and gave them authority to execute it.

From this it is also manifest, that the priesthood is a grace of the Holy Ghost; that it is not a function founded in the natural or civil rights of mankind, but is derived from the special authority of the Holy Ghost; and is as truly a positive institution as the sacraments. So that they who have no authority to alter the old sacraments, and substitute new ones, have no power to alter the old order of the clergy, or introduce any other order of them.

For why can we not change the sacraments? Is it not, because they are only sacraments, and operate as they are instituted by the Holy Ghost? Because they are useless ineffectual rites without this authority? And does not the same reason hold as well for the order of the clergy? Does not the same Scripture tell us they are equally instituted by the Holy Ghost, and oblige only by virtue of his authority? How absurd is it, therefore, to pretend to abolish, or depart from the settled order of the clergy, to make new orders, and think any God's ministers, unless we had his authority, and could make new sacraments, or a new religion?

My lord, how comes it that we cannot alter the Scriptures? Is it not, because they are divinely inspired, and dictated by the Holy Ghost? And since it is express Scripture, that the priesthood is instituted and authorized by the same Holy Spirit, why is not the Holy Ghost as much to be regarded in one institution as in another? Why may we not as well make a Gospel, and say, it was writ by the Holy Ghost, as making a new order of clergy, and call them his; or esteem them as having any relation to him?

From this it likewise appears, that there is an absolute necessity of a strict succession of authorized ordainers, from the apostolical times, in order to constitute a Christian priest. For since a commission from the Holy Ghost is necessary for the exercise of this office, no one now can receive it, but from those who have derived their authority in a true succession from the Apostles. We could not, my lord, call our present Bibles the word of God, unless we knew the copies from which they are taken, were taken from other true ones, till we come to the originals themselves. No more could we call any true ministers, or authorized by the Holy Ghost, who have not received their commission by an uninterrupted succession of lawful ordainers.

What an excellent divine would he be, who should tell the world, it was not necessary that the several copies and manuscripts, through which the Scriptures have been transmitted

through different ages and languages, should be all true ones, and none of them forged; that "this was a thing subject to so great uncertainty, that God could not hang our salvation on such niceties." Suppose, for proof of this, he should appeal to the Scriptures; and ask, where any mention is made of ascertaining the truth of all the copies? Would not this be a way of arguing very theological? The application is very easy.

Your lordship has not one word to prove the uninterrupted succession of the clergy a trifle or dream; but that it is subject to so great uncertainty, and is never mentioned in the Scriptures. And to the uncertainty of it, it is equally as uncertain, as whether the Scriptures be genuine. There is just the same sufficient historical evidence for the certainty of one, as the other. As to its not being mentioned in the Scriptures, the doctrine upon which it is founded, plainly made it unnecessary to mention it. It is needful for the Scriptures to tell us, that if we take our Bible from any false copy, that it is not the word of God. Why then need they tell us, that if we are ordained by usurping false pretenders to ordination, not deriving their authority to that end from the Apostles, that we are no priests? Does not the thing itself speak as plain in one case as in the other? The Scriptures are only of use to us, as they are the word of God: we cannot have this word of God, which was written so many years ago, unless we receive it from authentic copies and manuscripts.

The clergy have their commission from the Holy Ghost: the power of conferring this commission of the Holy Ghost was left with the Apostles: therefore the present clergy cannot have the same commission, or call, but from an order of men who have successively conveyed his power from the Apostles to the present time. So that, my lord, I shall beg leave to lay it down as a plain, undeniable, Christian truth, that the order of the clergy is an order of as necessary obligation as the sacraments; and as unalterable as the Holy Scriptures; the same Holy Ghost being as truly the author and founder of the priesthood, as the institutor of the sacraments, or the inspirer of those divine oracles. And when your lordship shall offer any fresh arguments to prove, that no particular sort of clergy is necessary; that the benedictions and administrations of the present clergy of our most excellent church; are trifling niceties; if I cannot shew that the same arguments will conclude against the authority of the sacraments and the

Scriptures, I faithfully promise your lordship to become a convert to your doctrine.

What your lordship charges upon your adversaries as an absurd doctrine, in pretending the necessity of one regular, successive, and particular order of the clergy, is a true Christian doctrine: and as certain from Scripture, as that we are to keep to the institution of particular sacraments; or not to alter those particular Scriptures which now compose the canon of the Old and New Testament.

By authoritative benediction, we do not mean any natural or intrinsic authority of our own: but a commission from God, to be effectual administrators of his ordinances, and to bless in his name. Thus, a person who is sent from God to foretel things, of which he had before no knowledge or notion; or to denounce judgments, which he has no natural power to execute, may be truly said to be an authoritative prophet, because he has the authority of God for what he does. Thus, when the bishop is said to confer grace in confirmation; this is properly an authoritative benediction; because he is then as truly doing what God has commissioned him to do, as when a prophet declares upon what errand he is sent.

It is in this sense, my lord, that the people are said to be authoritatively blessed by the regular clergy, because they are God's clergy, and act by his commission; because by their hands the people receive the graces and benefits of God's ordinances; which they have no more reason to expect from other ministers of their own election, or if the word may be used in an abusive sense of their own consecration, than to receive grace from sacraments of their own appointment. The Scriptures teach us, that the Holy Ghost has instituted an order of clergy: we say, a priesthood so authorized, can no more be changed by us, than we can change the Scriptures, or make new sacraments; because they are all founded on the same authority, without any power of a dispensation delegated to us in one case more than in another. If therefore we have a mind to continue in the covenant of Christ, and receive the grace and benefit of his ordinances, we must receive them through such hands as he has authorized for that purpose, to the end we may be qualified to partake the blessings of them. For as a true priest cannot benefit us by administering a false sacrament, so a true sacrament is nothing, when it is administered by a false uncommissioned minister. Besides this benediction

which attends the ordinances of God, when they are thus performed by authorized hands, there is a benediction of prayer, which we may justly think very effectual, when pronounced or dispensed by the same hands.

Thus when the bishop or priest intercedes for the congregation, or pronounces the apostolical benediction upon them, we do not consider this barely as an act of charity and humanity, of one christian praying for another, but as the work of a person who is commissioned by God to bless in his name, and be effectually ministerial in the conveyance of his graces; or as the prayer of one who is left with us in Christ's stead, to carry on his great design of saving us; and whose benedictions are ever ratified in heaven, but when we render ourselves, in one respect or other, incapable of them.

Now, my lord, they are these sacerdotal prayers, these authorized sacraments, these commissioned pastors, whom the Holy Ghost has made overseers of the flock of Christ, that your lordship encourages the laity to despise. You bid them "contemn the vain words of validity or invalidity of God's ordinances;" to "heed no particular sort of clergy, or the pretended necessity of their administrations."

Your lordship sets up in this controversy for an advocate for the laity, against the arrogant pretences and false claims of the clergy. My lord, we are no more contending for ourselves in this doctrine, than when we insist upon any article in the creed. Neither is it any more our particular cause when we assert our mission, than when we assert the necessity of the sacraments.

Who is to receive the benefit of that commission which we assert, but they? Who is to suffer, if we pretend a false one, but ourselves? Sad injury, indeed, offered to the laity, that we should affect to be thought ministers of God for their sakes! If we really are so, they are to receive the benefit; if not, we are to bear the punishment.

But your lordship comes too late in this glorious undertaking, to receive the reputation of it: the work has been already, in the opinion of most people, better done to your lordship's hands. The famous author of the "Rights of the Christian Church," has carried this Christian liberty to as great heights as your lordship. And though you have not one notion, I can recollect, that has given offence to the world, but what seems taken from that pernicious book, yet your lordship is not so just, as ever once to cite

or mention the author; who, if your lordship's doctrine be true, deserves to have a statue erected to his honour, and receive every mark of esteem which is due to the greatest reformer of religion.

Did not mine own eyes assure me, that he has cast no contempt upon the church, no reproach upon the evangelical institutions, or the sacred function, but what has been seconded by your lordship, I would never have placed your lordship in the same view with so scandalous a declaimer against the ordinances of Christ. Whether I am right or not, in this charge, I freely leave to the judgment of those to determine, who are acquainted with both your works. Yet this author, my lord, has been treated by the greatest and best part of the nation, as a free-thinking infidel. But for what, my lord? not that he has declared against the Scriptures; not that he has rejected revelation; (we are not, blessed be God, still so far corrupted with the principles of infidelity) but because he has reproached every particular church, as such, and denied all obligation to communion; because he has exposed benedictions, absolutions, and excommunications; denied the divine right of the clergy, and ridiculed the pretended sacredness and necessity of their administrations as mere niceties and trifles, though commonly in more distant, I was going to say, more decent ways: in a word, because he made all churches, all priests, all sacraments, however administered, equally valid, and denied any particular method necessary to salvation. Yet after all this prophane declamation he allows, my lord, that "religious offices may be appropriated to particular men, called clergy, for order sake only; and not on the account of any peculiar spiritual advantages, powers or privileges, which those who are set apart for them, have from heaven*."

Agreeable to this, your lordship owns, that you are not against the "order, or decency, or subordination belonging to Christian societies †."

But pray, my lord, do you mean any more by this than the above-mentioned author? Is it for any thing, but the sake of a little external order or conveniency? Is there any Christian law that obliges to observe this kind of order? Is there any real essential difference between persons ranked into this order? Is it a sin for any body, especially the civil magistrate, to leave this

* Page 121.

† Answer to Dr. Snape, p. 43.

order, and make what other orders he prefers to it? This your lordship cannot resolve in the affirmative; for then you must allow, that some communions are safer than others, and that some clergy have more authority than others.

Will your lordship say, that no particular order can be necessary; yet some order necessary, which may be different in different communions? This cannot hold good upon your lordship's principles: for since Christ has left no law about any order, no members of any particular communion need submit to that order; since it is confessed by your lordship, that in religion no laws but those of Christ are of any obligation. So that though you do not disclaim all external order and decency yourself, yet you have taught other people to do it if they please, and as much as they please.

Suppose, my lord, some layman, upon a pretence of your lordship's absence, or any other, should go into the diocese of Bangor, and there pretend to ordain clergymen; could your lordship quote one text of Scripture against him? Could you allege any law of Christ, or his Apostles, that he had broken? Could you prove him guilty of any sin? No, my lord, you would not do that, because this would be acknowledging such a thing as a sinful ordination; and if there be sinful ordinations, then there must be some law concerning ordinations: for "sin is the transgression" of the law:" and if there be a law concerning ordinations, then we must keep to the clergy lawfully ordained; and must confess, after all your lordship has said, or can say, that still some communions are safer than others.

If you should reprove such a one, as an Englishman, for acting in opposition to the English laws of decency and order, he would answer, that he has nothing to do with such trifles; that Christ was sole lawgiver in his kingdom: that he was content to have his kingdom as orderly and decent as Christ had left it; and since he had instituted no laws in that matter, it was presuming for others to take upon them to add any thing by way of order or decency, by laws of their own: that as he had as much authority from Christ to ordain clergy as your lordship, he would not depart from his Christian liberty.

If he should remonstrate to your lordship in these, or words to the like effect, he would only reduce your lordship's own doctrine to practice. This, my lord, is part of that confusion the learned Dr. Snape has charged you with being the author of, in the church

of God. And all persons, my lord, whom you have taught not to regard any particular sort of clergy, must know (if they have the common sense to which you appeal) that then no clergy are at all necessary; and that it is as lawful for any man to be his own priest, as to solicit his own cause. For to say that no particular sort of clergy are necessary, and yet that in general the clergy are necessary, is the same as to say, that truth is necessary to be believed; yet the belief of no particular truth is necessary.

The next thing to be considered, my lord, is your doctrine concerning absolutions. You begin thus: "The same you will find a sufficient reply to their presumptuous claim to an authoritative absolution. An infallible absolution cannot belong to fallible men. But no absolution can be authoritative, which is not infallible; therefore no authoritative absolution can belong to any man living*."

I must observe here, your lordship does not reject this absolution, because the claim of it is not founded in Scripture, but by an argument drawn from the nature of the thing: because you imagine such absolution requires infallibility for the execution of it, therefore it cannot belong to men. Should this be true, it would prove, that if our Saviour had really so intended, he could not have given this power to his ministers. But, my lord, who can see any repugnancy in the reason of the thing itself? Is it not as easy to conceive, that our Lord should confer his grace of pardon by the hands of his ministers, as by means of the sacraments? And may not such absolution be justly called authoritative, the power of which is granted and executed by his authority?

Is it impossible for men to have this authority from God, because they may mistake in the exercise of it? This argument proves too much; and makes as short work with every institution of christianity, as with this power of absolution.

For if it is impossible that men should have authority from God to absolve in his name, because they are not infallible, this makes them equally incapable of being entrusted with any other means of grace; and consequently, supposes the whole priest's office to imply a direct impossibility in the very notion of it.

Your lordship's argument is this: Christians have their sins pardoned upon certain conditions, but fallible men cannot certainly know these conditions; therefore fallible men cannot have authority to absolve.

From hence I take occasion to argue thus: persons are to be admitted to the sacraments on certain conditions; but fallible men cannot tell whether they come qualified to receive them according to these conditions; therefore fallible men cannot have authority to administer the sacraments.

2dly, This argument subverts all authority of the Christian religion itself, and the reason of every instituted means of grace: for if nothing can be authoritative but what a man is infallibly assured of, then the Christian religion cannot be an authoritative method of salvation; since a man, by being a Christian, does not become infallibly certain of his salvation; nor does grace infallibly attend the participation of the sacraments. So that though your lordship has formed this argument only against this absolving power, yet it has as much force against the sacraments, and the Christian religion itself. For if it be absurd to suppose that the priest should absolve any one, because he cannot be certain that he deserves absolution, does it not imply the same absurdity, to suppose that he should have the power of administering the sacraments, when he cannot be infallibly certain, that those who receive them are duly qualified? If a possibility of error destroys the power in one case, it as certainly destroys it in the other. Again; if absolution cannot be authoritative, unless it be infallible, then it is plain, that the Christian religion is not an authoritative means of salvation, because all Christians are not infallibly saved: nor can the sacraments be authoritative means of grace; because *all* who partake of them, do not infallibly obtain grace.

Your lordship proceeds with your laity by way of expostulation: "If they amuse you with that power which Christ left with his Apostles, 'whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained unto them *.'"

But why amuse, my lord? Are the texts of Holy Scripture to be treated as only matter of amusement; or does your lordship

know of any age in the church, when the very same doctrine which we now teach, has not been taught from the same texts?

Do you know any successors of the Apostles, who thought the power there specified did not belong to them? But however, your lordship has taught your laity to believe what we argue from this text, all amusement; and told them, "They may securely answer, that it is impossible for them to depend upon this right as any thing certain, till they can prove to you, that every thing spoken to the Apostles belongs to ministers in all ages*." The security of this answer, my lord, is founded upon this false presumption, viz. That the clergy can claim no right to the exercise of any part of their office, as successors of the Apostles, till they can prove that every thing that was spoken to the Apostles, belongs to them.

This proposition must be true, or else there is no force or security in the objection you here bring for the instruction of the laity. If it is well founded, then the clergy cannot possibly prove they have any more right to the exercise of any part of their office than the laity. Do they pretend to ordain, confirm, to admit or exclude men from the sacraments? By what authority is all this done? Is it not because the Apostles, whose successors they are, did the same things? But then, say your lordship's well-instructed laity, this is nothing to the purpose: prove yourselves Apostles; prove, that every thing said to the Apostles, belongs to you; and then it will be allowed that you may exercise these powers, because they exercised them: but as this is impossible to be done, so it is impossible for you to prove that you have any powers or authorities, because they had them.

And now, my lord, if the case be thus, what apology shall we make for Christianity, as it has been practised in all ages? How shall we excuse the noble army of martyrs, saints and confessors, who have boldly asserted the right to so many apostolical powers? Could any men in those ages pretend, that every thing that was spoken to the Apostles, belonged to themselves? False, then, was their claim, and presumptuous their authority, who should pretend to any apostolical powers, because the Apostles had them; when they could not prove, that every thing that was spoken to the Apostles, belonged to them.

Farther; to prove that the above-mentioned text does not confer the power of absolution on the clergy, you reason thus: "Whatever contradicts the natural notions of God, and the design and tenour of the Gospel, cannot be the true meaning of any passage in the Gospel; but to make the absolution of weak and fallible men so necessary, or so valid, that God will not pardon without them: or that all are pardoned who have them pronounced over them, is to contradict those notions, as well as the plain tenour of the Gospel *."

Be pleased, my lord, to point out your adversary: name any one church of England man that ever taught this romantic doctrine which you are confuting. Who ever taught such a necessity of absolutions, that God will pardon none without them? Who ever declared that all are pardoned, who have them pronounced over them? We teach the necessity and validity of sacraments; but do we ever declare that all are saved who receive them? Is there no medium between two extremes? No such thing, my lord, as moderation? Must every thing be thus absolute and extravagant, or nothing at all?

In another page, we have more of this same colouring: "But to claim a right to stand in God's stead, in such a sense that they can absolutely and certainly bless, or not bless, with their voice alone; this is the highest absurdity and blasphemy, as it supposeth God to place a set of men above himself, and to put out of his own hands the disposal of his blessings and curses †."

If your lordship had employed all this oratory against worshipping the sun or moon, it had just affected your adversaries as much as this. For who ever taught that any set of men could absolutely bless, or withhold blessing independent of God? Who ever taught that the Christian religion, or sacraments, or absolution, saved people on course, or without proper dispositions? Who ever claimed such an absolving power, as to set himself above God, and to take from him the disposal of his own blessings and curses? What has such extravagant descriptions, such romantic characters of absolution, to do with that power the clergy justly claim? Cannot there be a necessity in some cases of receiving absolution from their hands, except they set themselves above God? Is God robbed of the disposal of his blessings, when in obedience to his own commands, and in virtue of his own

authority, they admit some as members of the church, and exclude others from the communion of it? Do they pretend to be channels of grace, or the means of pardon, by any rights or powers naturally inherent in them? Do they not in all these things consider themselves as instruments of God, that are made ministerial to the edification of the church, purely by his will, and only so far as they act in conformity to it? Now if it has pleased God to confer the Holy Ghost in ordination, confirmation, &c. only by them, and to annex the grace of pardon to the imposition of their hands, on returning sinners; is it any blasphemy for them to claim and exert their power? Is the prerogative of God injured, because his own institutions are obeyed? Cannot he dispense his graces by what persons, and on what terms he pleases? Is he deprived of the disposal of his blessings, because they are bestowed on persons according to his order, and in obedience to his authority? If I should affirm, that Bishops have the sole power to ordain and confirm, would this be robbing God of his disposal of those graces that attend such actions? Is it not rather allowing and submitting to God's own disposal, when we keep close to those methods of it, which himself has prescribed?

Pray, my lord, consider the nature of sacraments. Are not they necessary to salvation? But is God therefore excluded from any power of his own? Has he for that reason, set bread and wine in the Eucharist, or water in baptism, above himself? Has he put the salvation of men out of his own power, because it depends on his own institutions? Is the salvation of Christians less his own act and deed, or less the effect of his own mercy, because these sacraments in great measure contribute to effect it? Why then, my lord, must that imposition of hands, that is attended with his grace of pardon, and which has no pretence to such grace, but in obedience to his order, and in virtue of his promise, be thus destructive of his prerogative? Where is there any diminution of his honour and authority, if such actions of the clergy are made necessary to the salvation of souls in some circumstances, as their washing in water, or their receiving bread and wine? Cannot God institute means of grace, but those means must not be above himself? They owe all their power and efficacy to his institution; and can operate no farther than the ends for which he instituted them. How then is he dethroned for being thus obeyed?

My lord, you take no notice of Scripture, but in a new way of your own contend against this power, from the nature of the thing: yet I must beg leave to say, this power stands upon as sure a bottom, and is as consistent with the goodness and majesty of God as the sacraments. If the annexing grace to sacraments, and making them necessary means of salvation, be a reasonable institution of God; so is his annexing pardon to the imposition of hands by the clergy on returning sinners. The grace or blessing received in either case, is of his own giving, and in a method of his own prescribing. And how this should be any injury to God's honour, or affront to his majesty, cannot easily be accounted for.

The clergy justly claim a power of reconciling men to God, from express texts of Scripture; and of delivering his pardons to penitent sinners. Your lordship disowns this claim, as making fallible men the absolute dispensers of God's blessings, and putting it in their power to damn and save as they please. But, my lord, nothing of this extravagance is included in it. They are only entrusted with a conditional power; which they are to exercise according to the rules God has given; and it only obtains its effect when it is so exercised. Every instituted means of grace is conditional; and is only then effectual, when it is attended with such circumstances as are required by God. If the clergy, through weakness, passion, or prejudice, exclude persons from the church of God, they injure only themselves. But, my lord, are these powers nothing, because they may be exercised in vain? Have the clergy no right at all to them, because they are not absolutely infallible in the exercise of them?

Can you prove, my lord, that they are not necessary, because they have not always the same effect? May not that be necessary to salvation, which is only effectual on certain conditions? Is not the Christian religion necessary to salvation, though all Christians are not saved? Are not the sacraments necessary means of grace, though the means of grace obtained thereby is only conditional? Is every one necessarily improved in grace who receives the sacrament? Or is it less necessary, because the salutary effects of it are not more universal? Why then must the imposition of hands be less necessary, because the grace of it is conditional, and only obtained in due and proper circumstances? Is absolution nothing, because if withheld wrongfully, it injures not the person who is denied it; and if given without due dispositions in the

penitent, it avails nothing? Is not this equally true of the sacraments, if they are denied wrongfully, or administered to unprepared receivers? But do they therefore cease to be standing and necessary means of grace?

The argument therefore against this power, drawn from the ignorance or passions of the clergy, whereby they may mistake or pervert the application of it, can be of no force; since it is as conditional as any other Christian institution. The salvation of no man can be endangered by the ignorance or passions of any clergyman in the use of this power: if they err in the exercise of it, the consequences of their error only affect themselves. The administration of the sacraments is certainly entrusted them: but will any one say, that the sacraments are not necessary to salvation; because they may, through ignorance or passion, make an ill use of this trust?

There is nothing in this doctrine to gratify the pride of clergymen, or encourage them to lord it over the flock of Christ. If you could suppose an Atheist or a Deist in orders; he might be arrogant, and domineer in the exercise of his powers: but who, that has the least sense of religion, can think it matter of triumph, that he can deny the sacraments, or refuse his benediction to any of his flock? Can he injure or offend the least of these, and will not God take account? Or, if they fall through his offence, will not their blood be required at his hands?

Neither is there any thing in it that can enslave the laity to the clergy; or make their salvation depend upon their arbitrary will. Does any one think his salvation in danger, because the sacraments (the necessary means of it) are only to be administered by the clergy? Why then must the salvation of penitents be endangered, or made dependent on the sole pleasure of the clergy, because they alone can reconcile them to the favour of God? If persons are unjustly denied the sacraments, they may humbly hope, that God will not lay the want of them to their charge. And if they are unjustly kept out of the church, and denied admittance, they have no reason to fear, but God will, notwithstanding, accept them, provided they be in other respects proper objects of his favour.

But to proceed; your lordship says, "The Apostles might possibly understand the power of remitting and retaining sins, to be that power of laying their hands upon the sick."

Is this possible, my lord? Then it is possible, the Apostles might think, that in the power here intended to be given them, nothing at all was intended to be given them. For the power of healing the sick was already conferred upon them. Therefore if no more was intended to be given them in this text, it cannot be interpreted, as having entitled them properly to any power at all.

2. The power mentioned here, was something that *JESUS* promised he would give them hereafter: which plainly supposes they had it not then: but they then had the power of healing, therefore something else must be intended here.

3. The power of the keys has always been looked upon as the highest in the apostolical order. But if it related only to the power of healing, it could not be so: for the Seventy, who were inferior to the Apostles, had this power.

4. The very manner of expression in this place, proves, that the power here intended to be given, could not relate to healing the sick, or to any thing of that nature; but to some spiritual powers, whose effects should not be visible; but be made good by virtue of God's promise. Thus, "Whomsoever ye shall heal on earth, I will heal in heaven," borders too near upon an absurdity. There is no occasion to promise to make good such actions as are good already, and have antecedently produced their effects. Persons who were restored to health, to their sight, or the use of their limbs, did not want to be assured, that the Apostles, by whom they were restored, had a power to that end; the exercise of which power proved and confirmed itself. There was no need therefore of a divine assurance, that a person who was healed, was actually healed in virtue of it. But when we consider this promise, as relating to a power whose effects are not visible; as the pardon of sins, the terms whereby it is expressed, are most proper: and it is very reasonable to suppose God promising, that the spiritual powers exercised by his ministers on earth, though they do not here produce their visible effects, shall yet be made good and effectual by him in heaven.

These reasons, my lord, I should think, are sufficient to convince any one, that the Apostles could not possibly understand these words in the sense of your lordship.

Let us now consider the commission given to Peter. Our Saviour said to him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of

“ heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall
 “ be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth,
 “ shall be loosed in heaven.”

Now, my lord, how should it enter into the thoughts of Peter, that nothing was here intended, or promised by our Saviour, but a power of healing ; which he not only had before, but also many other disciples, who were not Apostles ? “ I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ;” that is, according to your lordship, “ I will give thee power to heal the sick.” Can any thing be more contrary to the plain obvious sense of the words ? Can any one be said to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, because he may be the instrument of restoring people to health ? Are persons members of Christ's kingdom, with any regard to health ? How then, can he have any powers in that kingdom, or be said to have the keys of it, who is only empowered to cure distempers ? Could any one be said to have the keys of a temporal kingdom, who had no temporal power given in that kingdom ? Must not he therefore who has the keys of a spiritual kingdom, have some spiritual power in that kingdom ?

Christ has told us, that his kingdom is not of this world. Your lordship has told us, that it is so foreign to every thing of this world, that no worldly terrors or allurements, no pains or pleasures of the body, can have any thing to do with it. Yet here your lordship teaches us, that he may have the keys of this spiritual kingdom, who has only a power over diseases. My lord, are not sickness and health, sight and limbs, things of this world ? Have they not some relation to bodily pleasures and pains ? How then can a power about things wholly confined to this world, be a power in a kingdom that is not of this world ? The force of the argument lies here : our Saviour has assured us, that his kingdom is not of this world : your lordship takes it to be of so spiritual a nature, that it ought not, nay, that it cannot be encouraged or established by any worldly powers. Our Saviour gives to his Apostles the keys of this kingdom. Yet you have so far forgotten your own doctrine, and the spirituality of this kingdom, that you tell us, he here gave them a temporal power of diseases ; though he says, they were the keys of his kingdom which he gave them. Suppose any successor of the Apostles should from this text pretend to the power of the sword, to make people members of this kingdom : must not the answer be, that he mistakes the power, by not considering that they are only the keys of a spiritual,

not of a temporal kingdom, which were here delivered to the Apostles.

I humbly presume, my lord, that this would be as good an answer to your lordship's doctrine, as to theirs, who claim the right of the sword, till it can be shewn that health and sickness, sight and limbs, do not as truly relate to the things of this world as the power of the sword.

If this power of the keys must be understood, only as a power of inflicting or curing diseases; then the words, in the proper construction of them, must run thus: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," *i. e.* a peculiar society of healthful people, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; *i. e.* they shall always be in a state of health. "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," *i. e.* thou shalt have the power of inflicting and curing distempers; "and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," *i. e.* on whomsoever thou shalt inflict the leprosy on earth, he shall be a leper in heaven; "and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven;" *i. e.* whomsoever thou shalt cure of that disease on earth, shall be perfectly cured of it in heaven.

This, without putting any force upon the words, is your lordship's own interpretation; which exposes the honour and authority of Scriptures as much as the greatest enemy to them can wish. If our Saviour could mean by these words, only a power of healing distempers; or if the Apostles understood them in that sense, we may as well believe, that when he said his kingdom was not of this world, that he meant, it was of this world: and that the Apostles so understood him too.

But however, for the benefit and edification of the laity, your lordship has another interpretation for them: you say, "if they (the Apostles) did apply this power of remitting sins to the certain absolution of particular persons, it is plain, they could do it upon no other bottom but this; that God's will, and good pleasure, about such particular persons was infallibly communicated to them."

Pray, my lord, how, or where is this so plain? Is it plain, that they never baptized persons, till God had "infallibly communicated his good pleasure to them about such particular persons?" Baptism is an institution equally sacred with this other, and puts the person baptized in the same state of grace, that absolution does the penitent. Baptism is designed for the remission of sin. It is

an ordinance to which absolution is consequent, but I suppose persons may be baptized without such infallible communication promised, as your lordship contends for. If therefore it be not necessary for the exercise of absolution by baptism, why must it be necessary for absolution by the imposition of hands?

Can pastors without infallibility baptize Heathens, and absolve, or be the instruments of absolving them thereby from their sins? Are they not as able to absolve Christian penitents, or restore those who have apostatized? If human knowledge, and the common rules of the church, be sufficient to direct the priest to whom he ought to administer the sacraments; they are also sufficient for the exercise of this other part of the sacerdotal office.

But your lordship proceeds thus: "Not that they themselves absolved any."

No, my lord, no more than water in baptism of itself purifies the soul from sin. This baptismal water is, notwithstanding, necessary for the remission of our sins.

Again you say, "Not that God was obliged to bind and loose the guilt of men, according to their declarations, considered as their own decisions and their own determinations." No, my lord; who ever thought so? God is not obliged to confer grace by the baptismal water, considered only as water; but he is considered as his own institution for that end and purpose. So, if these declarations are considered only as the declarations of men, God is not obliged by them: but when they are considered as the declarations of men whom he has especially authorized to make such declarations in his name, then they are as effectual with God, as any other of his institutions whatever.

I proceed now to a paragraph that bears as hard upon our Saviour as some others have done upon his Apostles and their successors; where your lordship designs to prove, that though Christ claimed a power of remitting sins himself, or in his own person, yet that he had really no such power.

You go upon these words: If we look back upon our Saviour himself, we shall find, that when he declares that the Son of man had power upon earth to forgive sins, even he himself either meant by it, the power of a miraculous releasing man from his affliction; or if it related to another more spiritual sense of the words, the power of declaring, that the man's sins were forgiven by God*."

The words of our Saviour; which we are to look back upon; are these: "Whether is it easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Mark ii. 9, 10. As if he had said, "Is not the same divine authority and power required? Is it not a work as peculiar to God, to perform miraculous cures, as to forgive sins? The reason therefore, why I now chuse to declare my authority, rather by saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," than by saying, "Arise and walk," was purely to teach you this truth, that the power of the Son of man is not confined to bodily cures; but that he has power on earth to forgive sins."

This, my lord, is the first obvious sense of the words; and therefore I take it to be the true sense. But your lordship can look back upon them, till you find that Christ has not this power, though he claims it expressly; but that he only intends a power of doing something or other; which no more imports a power of forgiving sins, than of remitting any temporal debt or penalty.

If our blessed Saviour had intended to teach the world; that he was invested with this power; I would gladly know, how he must have expressed himself, to have satisfied your lordship that he really had it? He must have told you, that he had not this power; and then possibly, your lordship would have taught us that he had this power. For no one can discover any reason why you should deny it him; but because he has in express words claimed and asserted it. I hope your lordship has not so low an opinion of our Saviour's person, as to think it unreasonable in the nature of the thing, that he should have this power. Where does it contradict any principle of reason, to say, that a king should be able to pardon his subjects? Since there is no absurdity then in the thing itself; and it is so expressly asserted in the Scripture; it is just matter of surprize, that your lordship should carry your reader from a plain consistent sense of the words, to either this or that something or other, the origin whereof is only to be sought for in your lordship's own invention; rather than not exclude Christ from a power which he declared he had, and declared he had it for this very reason, that we might know that he had it. Our Saviour has told us, that the way to heaven is narrow. Your lordship might as reasonably prove from hence, that he meant, it was broad, as that he did not mean he could

forgive sins, when he said, “ that ye may know, that the Son of
“ man hath power on earth to forgive sins.”

Your lordship has rejected all church authority, and despised the pretended powers of the clergy, for this reason; because Christ is the sole King, sole Lawgiver, and Judge in his kingdom. But, it seems, your lordship, notwithstanding, thinks it now time to depose him: and this sole King in his own kingdom, must not be allowed to be capable of pardoning his own subjects.

This doctrine, my lord, is delivered, I suppose, as your other doctrines, out of a hearty concern and Christian zeal for the privileges of the laity; and to shew, that your lordship is not only able to limit as you please, the authority of temporal kings; but also to make Christ himself sole King, and yet no King, in his spiritual kingdom. For, my lord, the kingdom of Christ is a society, founded in order to the reconciliation of sinners to God. If therefore Christ could not pardon sins, to what end could he either erect, or how could he support his kingdom, which is only in the great and last design of it, to consist of absolved sinners? He that cannot forgive sins in a kingdom that is erected for the remission of sins, can be no more sole King in it, than he that has no temporal power, can be sole king in a temporal kingdom. Therefore your lordship has been thus mighty serviceable to the Christian laity, as to teach them, that Christ is not only sole King, but no King in his kingdom.

This is not the first contradiction your lordship has unhappily fallen into, in your attempts upon kingly authority. Nor is it the last; which I shall presume to observe to the common sense of your laity.

Again, in this account of our blessed Saviour, your lordship has made no difference between him and his Apostles, as to this absolving authority. For you say, the great commission given to them, implied either a power of releasing men from their bodily afflictions; or of declaring such to be pardoned, whom God had assured them that he had pardoned: and this is all that you here allow to Christ himself.

Your lordship's calling him so often King, and sole King, &c. in his kingdom, and yet making him a mere creature in it, is too like the insult and designed sarcasm of the Jews, who, when they had nailed him to the cross, writ over his head, “ This is the King
“ of the Jews.”

But to proceed: your lordship proves, that our Saviour had not the power of forgiving sins; because his way of expression was, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This was plainly to acknowledge, and keep up that true notion, that God alone forgiveth sins.

Let us therefore put this argument in form. Christ has affirmed, that he had power to forgive sins: but his way was, to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Therefore Christ had not power to forgive sins. *2. E. D.*

It is much your lordship did not recommend this to your laity as another invincible demonstration. For by the help of it, my lord, they may prove, that our Saviour could no more heal diseases, than forgive sins. As thus; Christ indeed pretends to a power of healing diseases; but his usual way of speaking to the diseased person, was, "Thy faith hath made thee whole;" therefore he had not the power of healing diseases. The argument has the same force against one power, as against the other. If he did not forgive sins, because he said, "thy sins are forgiven thee;" no more did he heal diseases, because he said, "thy faith hath made thee whole."

I have a claim of several debts upon a man: I forgive him them all, in these words, Thy debts are remitted thee. A philosophical wit stands by, and pretends to prove, that I had not the power of remitting these debts; because I said, thy debts are remitted thee. What can come up to, or equal such profound philosophy, but the divinity of one who teaches, our Saviour could not forgive sins, because he said, "thy sins are forgiven thee?"

But your lordship says, the reason why our Saviour thus expresses himself, "thy sins are forgiven thee," "was plainly to keep up that true notion, that God alone forgiveth sins." Therefore, my lord, according to this doctrine, our Saviour was obliged not to claim any power that was peculiar or appropriated to God alone. For if this be an argument why he should not forgive sins, it is also an argument that he ought not to claim any other power, any more than this; which is proper to God, and only belongs to him. But, my lord, if he did express himself thus, that he might not lay claim to any thing that was peculiar to God, how came he in so many other respects, to lay claim to such things as are as truly peculiar to God, as the forgiveness of sins? How came he in so many instances to make himself equal to God? How came

he to say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me? And that men should worship the Son, even as the Father?" That he was the Son of God; that he was the way, the truth, and the life?

Are not evangelical faith, worship and trust, duties that are solely due to God? Does he not as much invade the sovereignty of God, who lays claim to these duties, as he that pretends to forgive sins? Did not Christ also give his disciples power and authority over devils and unclean spirits, and power to heal all manner of diseases?

Now, if Christ did not assume a power to forgive sins, because God alone could forgive sins, it is also as unaccountable that he should exercise other authorities and powers which are as strictly peculiar to God, as that of forgiving sins. As if a person should disown that Christ is omniscient, because omniscience is an attribute of God alone; and yet confess his omnipotence, which is an attribute equally divine.

But farther, my lord: did our Saviour thus designedly express himself, lest He should be thought to assume any power which was divine, then it is certain (according to this opinion) that if He had assumed any such power, or pretended to do what was peculiar to God, he had been the occasion of misleading men into error. For if this be a plain reason, why he expressed himself so as to disown this power, it is plain, that if he had owned it, he had been condemned by this argument, as teaching false doctrine.

Now if this would have been interpretatively false doctrine in Christ, to take upon himself any thing that was peculiar to God, the Apostles were guilty of propagating this false doctrine. For there is scarce any known attribute or power of God, but they ascribe it to our Saviour. They declare him eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, &c. Is it not a true notion that God alone can create, and is governor of the universe? Yet the Apostles expressly assure us of Christ, that "all things were created by him," and that "God hath put all things in subjection under his feet." It is very surprising, that your lordship should exclude Christ from this power of forgiving sins, though he has expressly said he could forgive sins, because such a power belongs only to God; when it appears through the whole Scripture, that there is scarce any divine power which our Saviour himself has not claimed, nor any attribute of God, but what his Apostles have ascribed to him. They have made him the creator, the preserver, the governor of

the universe, the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him; and yet your lordship tells us that he did not pretend to forgive sins, because that was a power peculiar to God.

Here is then (to speak in your lordship's elegant style) an immoveable resting-place for your laity to set their feet upon; here is an argument that will last them for ever; they must believe that our Saviour did not forgive sins, because this was a power that belonged to God, though the Scriptures assure us that every other divine power belonged to Christ. That is, they must believe that though our Saviour claimed all divine powers, yet not this divine power, because it is a divine power. And, my lord, if they have the common sense to believe this, they may also believe that though our Saviour took human nature upon him, yet that he had not a human soul, because it is proper to man. They may believe that any person who has all kingly power, cannot remit or reprieve a malefactor, because it is an act of kingly power to do it; or that a bishop cannot suspend an offender of his diocese, because it is an act of episcopal power to do it. All these reasons are as strong and demonstrative as that Christ, who claimed all divine powers, could not forgive sins, because it was a divine power.

Lastly, In this argument your lordship has plainly declared against the divinity of Christ, and ranked him in the order of creatures. Your lordship says, Christ did not forgive sins, because it is God alone who can forgive sins; as plain an argument as can be offered, that in your lordship's opinion, Christ is not God: for if you believed him, in a true and proper sense, God, how could you exclude him from the power of forgiving sins, because God alone can forgive sins? It is inconsistent with sense and reason to deny this power to Christ because it is a divine power, but only because you believe him not to be a divine person. If Christ was God, then he might forgive sins, though God alone can forgive sins: but you say, Christ cannot forgive sins because God alone can forgive sins; therefore it is plain, that according to your lordship's doctrine, Christ is not truly, or in a proper sense, God.

Here, my lord, I desire again to appeal to the common sense of your laity; let them judge betwixt the Scriptures and your lordship. The Scriptures plainly and frequently ascribe all divine attributes to Christ: they make him the creator and governor of the world; God over all, blessed for ever. Yet your lordship

makes him a creature, and denies him such a power, because it belongs only to God.

You yourself, my lord, have allowed him to be absolute ruler over the consciences of men; to be an arbitrary dispenser of the means of salvation to mankind; than which powers, none can be more divine: and yet you hold that he cannot forgive sins, because pardon of sin can only be the effect of a divine power.

Is it not equally a divine power (even according to your lordship) to rule over the consciences of men, to give laws of salvation, and to act in these affairs with an uncontrollable power, as to forgive sins?

My lord, let their common sense here discover the absurdity (for I must call it so) of your new scheme of government in Christ's kingdom. Christ is absolute Lord of it, (according to yourself) and can make or unmake laws relating to it; can dispense or withhold grace as he pleases in this spiritual kingdom, all which powers are purely divine; yet you say he cannot forgive sins, though every express power which you have allowed him over the consciences of men, be as truly a divine power as that of forgiving sins. Has not Christ a proper and personal power to give grace to his subjects? Is he not Lord over their consciences? And are not these powers as truly appropriated to God? And has not your lordship often taught them to be so, as that of forgiveness of sins? Is it not as much the prerogative of God to have any natural intrinsic power, to confer grace, or any spiritual benefit to the souls of men, as to forgive sins? Has not your lordship despised all the administrations of the clergy, because God's graces can only come from himself, and are only to be received from his own hands? The conclusion therefore is this; either Christ has a personal intrinsic power to confer grace in his kingdom, or he has not; if you say he has not, then you are chargeable with the collusion of making him a king in a spiritual kingdom, where you allow him no spiritual power: if you say he has, then you fall into this contradiction, that you allow him to have divine powers, though he cannot have divine powers; that is, you allow him to give grace, though it is a divine power, and not to forgive sins, because it is a divine power. My lord, I wish your laity (if there be any to whom you can render it intelligible) much joy of such profound divinity. Or if there are others who are more taken with your lordship's sincerity, I desire them not to pass by this following remarkable instance of it: your lordship has here as plainly declared, as words

can consequentially declare any thing, that you do not believe Christ to be God, yet profess yourself bishop of a church, whose liturgy in so many repeated testimonies declares the contrary doctrine, and which obliges you to express your assent and consent to such doctrine. My lord, I here call upon your sincerity, either declare Christ to be perfect God, and then shew why he could not forgive sins, or deny him to be perfect God, and then shew how you can sincerely declare your assent and consent to the doctrines of the church of England.

This, my lord, has an appearance of prevarication, which you cannot, I hope, charge upon any of your adversaries: who if they cannot think, that to be sincere is the only thing necessary to recommend men to the favour of God, yet may have as much, or possibly more sincerity, than those who do think so.

Before I take leave of your lordship, I must take notice of a "resting-place," a "strong retreat," a "lasting foundation," i. e. a demonstration in the strictest sense of the words, that all church-communion is unnecessary.

Your lordship sets it out in these words:

"I am not now going to accuse you of a heresy against charity, but of a heresy against the possibility and nature of things. As thus Mr. Nelson (for instance) thinks himself obliged in conscience to communicate with some of our church. Upon this you declare he hath no title to God's mercy; and you and all the world allow, that if he communicates with you whilst his conscience tells him it is a sin, he is self-condemned, and out of God's favour. That notion, (viz. the necessity of church-communion) therefore, which implies this great invincible absurdity, cannot be true."

Pray, my lord, what is this wonderous curiosity of a demonstration, but the common case of an erroneous conscience? Did the strictest contenders for church-communion ever teach, that any terms are to be complied with against conscience? But it is a strange conclusion to infer from thence, that there is no obligation to communion, or that all things are to be held indifferent, because they are not to be complied with against one's conscience.

The truths of the Christian religion have the same nature and obligation, whatever our opinions are of them, and those that are necessary to be believed, continue so, whether we can persuade ourselves to believe them or not. I suppose your lordship will not say, that the articles of faith, and necessary institutions of the Christian religion, are no otherwise necessary, than because we

believe them to be so, that our persuasion is the only cause of the necessity; but if their necessity be not owing merely to our belief of them, then it is certain that our disbelief of them cannot make them less necessary. If the ordinances of Christ, and the articles of faith are necessary, because Christ has made them so, that necessity must continue the same, whether we believe and observe them or not.

So that, my lord, we may still maintain the necessity of church-communion, and the strict observance of Christ's ordinances, notwithstanding that people have different persuasions in these matters, presuming that our opinions can no more alter the nature or necessity of Christ's institutions, than we can believe error into truth, good into evil, or light into darkness. I shall think myself no heretic against the nature of things, though I tell a conscientious Socinian, that the divinity of Christ is necessary to be believed, or a conscientious Jew, that it is necessary to be a Christian in order to be saved. But if your lordship's demonstration was accepted, we should be obliged to give up the necessity of every doctrine and institution to every disbeliever that pretended conscience. We must not tell any party of people that they are in any danger for being out of communion with us, if they do but follow their own persuasion.

Your lordship's invincible demonstration proceeds thus:

“ We must not insist upon the necessity of joining with any particular church, because then conscientious persons will be in danger either way; for if there be a necessity of it, then there is a danger if they do not join with it; and if they comply against their consciences, the danger is the same.”

What an inextricable difficulty is here! How shall divinity or logic be able to relieve us!

Be pleased, my lord, to accept of this solution in lieu of your demonstration.

I will suppose the case of a conscientious Jew; I tell him that Christianity is the only covenanted method of salvation, and that he can have no title to the favour of God, till he professes the faith of Christ. What, replies he, would you direct me to do? If I embrace christianity against my conscience, I am out of God's favour; and if I follow my conscience, and continue a Jew, I am also out of his favour. The answer is this; my lord; the Jew is to obey his conscience, and to be left to the uncovenanted, unpromised terms of God's mercy, whilst the con-

scientific Christian is entitled to the express and promised favours of God.

There is still the same absolute necessity of believing in Christ, christianity is still the only method of salvation, though the sincere Jew cannot so persuade himself; and we ought to declare it to all Jews and unbelievers whatsoever, that they can only be saved by embracing christianity. That a false religion does not become a true one, nor a true one false, in consequence of their opinions; but that if they are so unhappy as to refuse the covenant of grace, they must be left to such mercy as is without any covenant. And now, my lord, what is become of this mighty demonstration? Does it prove that christianity is not necessary, because the conscientious Jew may think it is not so? It may as well prove that the moon is no larger than a man's head, because an honest ignorant countryman may think it no larger.

Is there any person of common sense, who would think it a demonstration that he is not obliged to go to church, because a conscientious Dissenter will not? Could he think it less necessary to be a Christian, because a sincere Jew cannot embrace christianity? Could he take it to be an indifferent matter, whether he believed the divinity of Christ, because a conscientious Socinian cannot? Yet this is your lordship's invincible demonstration, that we ought not to insist upon the necessity of church-communion, because a conscientious disbeliever cannot comply with it.

A small degree of common sense would teach a man that true religion and the terms of salvation must have the same obligatory force, whether we reason rightly about them or not; and that they who believe and practise according to them, are in express covenant with God, which entitles them to his favour; whilst those who are sincerely erroneous, have nothing but the sincerity of their errors to plead, and are left to such mercy of God, as is without any promise. Here, my lord, is nothing frightful or absurd in this doctrine; they who are in the church which Christ has founded, are upon terms which entitles them to God's favour; they who are out of it, fall to his mercy.

But your lordship is not content with the terms of the Gospel, or a doctrine that only saves a particular sort of people; this is a narrow view, not wide enough for your notions of liberty. Particular religions, and particular covenants, are demonstrated to be absurd, because particular persons may disbelieve, or not submit to them.

Your lordship must have doctrines that will save all people alike, in every way that their persuasion leads them to take, but, my lord, there needs be no greater demonstration against your lordship's doctrine, than that it equally favours every way of worship; for an argument which equally proves every thing, has been generally thought to prove nothing; which happens to be the case of your lordship's important demonstration.

Your lordship indeed only instances in a particular person, Mr. Nelson; but your demonstration is as serviceable to any other person who has left any other church whatever. The conscientious Quaker, Muggletonian, Independent, or Socinian, &c. have the same right to obey conscience, and blame any church that assumes a power of censuring them, as Mr. Nelson had; and if they are censured by any church, that church is as guilty of the same heresy against the nature of things, as that church which censured Mr. Nelson, or any church that should pretend to censure any other person whatever.

I am not at all surprised that your lordship should teach this doctrine, but it is something strange that such an argument should be obtruded upon the world as an unheard-of demonstration, and that in an "Appeal to common Sense." Suppose somebody or other in defence of your lordship, should take upon him to demonstrate to the world, that there is no such thing as colour, because there are some people that cannot see them; or sounds, because there are some who do not hear them, he would have found out the only demonstrations in the world that could equal your lordship's, and would have as much reason to call those heretics against the nature of things, who should disbelieve him, and insist upon the reality of sounds, as your lordship has to call your adversaries so.

For, is there no necessity of church-communion, because there are some who do not conceive it? Then there are no sounds, because there are some who do not hear them; for it is certainly as easy to believe away the truth and reality, as the necessity of things.

Some people have only taught us the innocency of error, and been content with setting forth its harmless qualities; but your lordship has been a more hearty advocate, and given it a power over every truth and institution of christianity. If we have but an erroneous conscience, the whole Christian dispensation is can-

celled; all the truth and doctrines in the Bible are demonstrated to be unnecessary, if we do not believe them.

How unhappily have the several parties of Christians been disputing for many ages, who if they could but have found out this intelligible demonstration, (from the case of an erroneous conscience) would have seen the absurdity of pretending to necessary doctrines, and insisting upon church-communion; but it must be acknowledged your lordship's new invented engine for the destruction of churches; and it may be expected the good Christians of no church will return your lordship their thanks for it.

Your lordship has thought it a mighty objection to some doctrines in the church of England, that the Papists might make some advantage of them: but yet your own doctrine defends all communions alike, and serves the Jew and Socinian, &c. as much as any other sort of people. Though this sufficiently appears, from what has been already said, yet that it may be still more obvious to the common sense of every one, I shall reduce these doctrines to practice, and suppose for once, that your lordship intends to convert a Jew, a Quaker, or Socinian.

Now in order to make a convert of any of them, these preliminary propositions are to be first laid down according to your lordship's doctrine.

Some Propositions for the improvement of true religion.

Proposition I. That we are neither more or less in the favour of God for living in any particular method or way of worship, but purely as we are sincere. Preserv. p. 90.

Prop. II. That no church ought to unchurch another, or declare it out of God's favour. Preserv. p. 85.

Prop. III. That nothing loses us the favour of God, but a wicked insincerity. Ibid.

Prop. IV. That a conscientious person can be in no danger for being out of any particular church. Preserv. p. 90.

Prop. V. That there is no such thing as any real perfection or excellency in any religion that can justify our adhering to it, but that is all founded in our personal persuasion. Which your lordship thus proves: "When we left the Popish doctrines, was it because they were *actually* corrupt? No; the reason was, because we thought them so." Therefore if we might leave the church of Rome, not because her doctrines were corrupt, but because we thought them so, then the same reason will justify

any one else in leaving any church, how true soever its doctrines are; and consequently there is no such thing as any real perfection or excellency in any religion considered in itself, but it is right or wrong according to our persuasions about it. *Preserv.* p. 85.

Prop. VI. That Christ is sole King and Law-giver in his kingdom; that no men have any power of legislation in it; that if we would be good members of it, we must shew ourselves subjects of Christ alone, without any regard to man's judgment.

Prop. VII. That as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so when worldly encouragements are annexed to it, these are so many divisions against Christ and his own express word. *Serm.* p. 11.

Prop. VIII. That to pretend to know the hearts and sincerity of men, is nonsense and absurdity. *Serm.* p. 93.

Prop. IX. That God's graces are only to be received immediately from himself. *Serm.* p. 89.

These, my lord, are your lordship's own propositions, expressed in your own terms, without any exaggeration.

And now, my lord, begin as soon as you please, either with a Quaker, Socinian, or Jew; use any argument whatsoever to convert them, and you shall have a sufficient answer from your own propositions.

Will you tell the Jew that christianity is necessary to salvation? He will answer from Prop. I. "That we are neither more or less in the favour of God for living in any particular method or way of worship, but purely as we are sincere."

Will your lordship tell him, that the truth of Christianity is so well asserted, that there is no excuse left for unbelievers? He will answer from Prop. V. "That all religion is founded in personal persuasion; that as your lordship does not believe that Christ is come, because he is actually come, but because you think he is come; so he does not disbelieve Christ because he is not actually come, but because he thinks he is not come." So that here, my lord, the Jew gives as good a reason why he is not a Christian, as your lordship does why you are not a Papist.

If your lordship should turn the discourse to a Quaker, and offer him any reasons for embracing the doctrine of the church of England, you cannot possibly have any better success; any one may see from your propositions, that no argument can

be urged but what your lordship has there fully answered. For since you allow nothing to the truth of doctrines, or the excellency of any communion as such, it is demonstrable that no church or communion can have any advantage above another, which is absolutely necessary in order to persuade any sensible man to exchange any communion for another.

Will your lordship tell a Quaker that there is any danger in that particular way that he is in?

He can answer from Prop. 1st, 3d, and 4th. "That a conscientious person cannot be in any danger for being out of any particular church."

Will your lordship tell him that his religion is condemned by the universal church?

He can answer from Prop. II. "That no church ought to unchurch another, or declare it out of God's favour."

Will you tell him that Christ has instituted sacraments as necessary means of grace, which he neglects to observe?

He will answer you from Prop. IX. "That God's graces are only to be received immediately from himself. And to think that bread and wine, or the sprinkling of water is necessary to salvation, is as absurd as to think any order of the clergy is necessary to recommend us to God."

Will your lordship tell him that he displeases God, by not holding several articles of faith, which Christ has required us to believe?

He can reply from Prop. III. "That nothing loses us the favour of God but a wicked insincerity." And from Prop. V. "That as your lordship believes such things, not because they are actually to be believed, but because you think so, so he disbelieves them, not because they are actually false, but because he thinks so."

Will your lordship tell him he is insincere?

He can reply from Prop. VI. "That to assume to know the hearts and sincerity of men, is nonsense and blasphemy."

Will your lordship tell him that he ought to conform to a church established by the laws of the land?

He can answer from Prop. VIII. "That this very establishment is an argument against conformity; for as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so when worldly encouragements are annexed to it, they are so many decisions against Christ, and his own express words." And from Prop. VII. "That seeing Christ is

sole King and Law-giver in his kingdom, and no men have any power of legislation in it, they who would be good members of it, must shew themselves subjects to Christ alone, without any regard to man's judgment.

I am inclined to think, my lord, that it is now demonstrated to the common sense of the laity, that your lordship cannot urge any argument, either from the truth, the advantage, or necessity of embracing the doctrines of the church of England to either Jew, Heretic, or Schismatic, but you have helped him to a full answer to any such argument, from your own principles.

Are we, my lord, to be treated as Popishly affected for asserting some truths which the Papists join with us in asserting? Is it a crime in us not to drop some necessary doctrines, because the Papists have not dropt them? If this is to be Popishly affected, we own the charge, and are not for being such true Protestants as to give up the Apostles' creed, or lay aside the sacraments, because they are received by the church of Rome. I cannot indeed charge your lordship with being well affected to the church of Rome or of England, to the Jews, the Quakers, or Socinians; but this I have demonstrated, and will undertake the defence of it, that your lordship's principles equally serve them all alike, and do not give the least advantage to one church above another, as has sufficiently appeared from your principles.

I will no more say your lordship is in the interest of the Quakers, or Socinians, or Papists, then I would charge you with being in the interest of the church of England; for as your doctrines equally support them all, he ought to ask your lordship's pardon, who should declare you more a friend to one than the other.

I intended, my lord, to have considered another very obnoxious article in your lordship's doctrines, concerning the repugnancy of temporal encouragements to the nature of Christ's kingdom; but the consistency and reasonableness of guarding this spiritual kingdom with human laws, has been defended with so much perspicuity and strength of argument, and your lordship's objections so fully confuted by the judicious and learned Dean of Chichester, that I presume this part of the controversy is finally determined.

I hope, my lord, that I have delivered nothing here that needs any excuse or apology to the laity, that they will not be persuaded, through any vain pretence of liberty, to make themselves parties

against the first principles of christianity ; or imagine, that whilst we contend for the positive institutions of the Gospel, the necessity of church-communion, or the excellency of our own, we are robbing them of their natural rights, or interfering with their privileges. Whilst we appear in the defence of any part of christianity, we are engaged for them in the common cause of Christians ; and I am persuaded better things of the laity, than to believe that such labours will render either our persons or professions hateful to them. Your lordship has indeed endeavoured to give an invidious turn to the controversy, by calling upon the laity to assert their liberties, as if they were in danger from the principles of christianity. But, my lord, what liberty does any layman lose by our asserting, that church-communion is necessary ? What privilege is taken from them by our teaching the danger of certain ways and methods of religion ? Is a man made a slave because he is cautioned against the principles of the Quakers, against fanaticism, popery, or socinianism ? Is he in a state of bondage, because the sacraments are necessary, and none but episcopal clergy ought to administer them ? Is his freedom destroyed because there is a particular order of men appointed by God to minister in holy things, and be serviceable to him in recommending him to the favour of God ? Can any persons, my lord, think these things breaches upon their liberty, except such as think the commandments a burden ? Is there any more hardship in saying thou shalt keep to an episcopal church, than thou shalt be baptized ? Or in requiring people to receive particular sacraments, than to believe particular books of Scripture to be the word of God ? If some other advocate for the laity should, out of zeal for their rights, declare that they need not believe one half of the articles in the creed ; if they would but assert their liberty, he would be as true a friend, and deserve the same applause, as he who should assert the necessity of church-communion is inconsistent with the natural rights and liberties of mankind.

I am, my lord,

Your lordship's most humble Servant,

WILLIAM LAW.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I HOPE your lordship will not think it unnatural or impertinent, to offer here a word or two in answer to some objections against my former letter.

To begin with doctrine of the uninterrupted succession of the clergy.

I have, as I think, proved that there is a divine commission required to qualify any one to exercise the priestly office, and that seeing this divine commission can only be had from such particular persons as God has appointed to give it, therefore it is necessary that there should be a continual succession of such persons, in order to keep up a commissioned order of the clergy. For if the commission itself be to descend through ages; and distinguish the clergy from the laity; it is certain the persons who alone can give this commission, must descend through the same ages, and consequently an uninterrupted succession is as necessary, as that the clergy have a divine commission. Take away this succession, and the clergy may as well be ordained by one person as another; a number of women may as well give them a divine commission, as a congregation of any men; they may indeed appoint persons to officiate in holy orders, for the sake of decency and order; but then there is no more in it than an external decency and order, they are no more the priests of God, than those that pretended to make them so. If we had lost the Scriptures it would be very well to make as good books as we could, and come as near them as possible; but then it would be not only folly, but presumption, to call them the word of God. But I proceed to the objections against the doctrine of an uninterrupted succession.

First, It is said, that there is no mention made of it in Scripture, as having any relation to the being of a church.

Secondly, That it is subject to so great uncertainty, that if it be necessary, we cannot now be sure we are in the church.

Thirdly, That it is a Popish doctrine, and gives them great advantage over us.

I begin with the first objection, that there is no mention made of it in the Scriptures, which though I think I have sufficiently answered in this letter, I shall here farther consider.

Pray, my lord, is it not a true doctrine, that "the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation?" But, my lord, it is nowhere expressly said, that "the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation." It is nowhere said, that no other articles of faith need be believed. Where does it appear in Scripture, that the Scriptures were writ by any divine command? Have any of the Gospels or Epistles this authority to recommend them? Are they necessary to be believed, because there is any law of Christ concerning the necessity of believing them?

May I reject this uninterrupted succession, because it is not mentioned in Scripture? And may I not as well reject all the Gospels? Produce your authority, my lord, mention your texts of Scripture, where Christ has hung the salvation of men upon their believing, that St. Matthew or St. John wrote such a book seventeen hundred years ago. These, my lord, are niceties and trifles which are not to be found in Scripture, and consequently have nothing to do with the salvation of men.

Now if nothing be to be held as necessary, but what is expressly required in so many words in Scripture, then it can never be proved that the Scriptures themselves are a "standing rule of faith in all ages," since it is nowhere expressly asserted, nor is it any where said, that the Scriptures should be continued as a rule of faith in all ages. Is it an objection against the necessity of a perpetual succession of the clergy, that it is not mentioned in the Scripture? And is it not as good a one against the necessity of making Scripture the "standing rule of faith in all ages," since it is never said, that they were to be continued as a standing rule in all ages? If things are only necessary for being said to be so in Scripture, then all that are not thus taught are equally unnecessary, and consequently it is no more necessary that the Scripture should be a fixed rule of faith in all ages, than that there should be bishops to ordain in all ages.

Again, where shall we find it in Scripture, that the sacraments are to be continued in every age of the church? Where is it said, that they shall always be the ordinary means of grace necessary to be observed? Is there any law of Christ, any text of Scripture, that expressly asserts, that if we leave the use of the sacraments, we are out of covenant with God? Is it any where directly said, that we must never lay them aside, or that they will be perpetually necessary? No, my lord, this is a nicety and trifle not to be found

in Scripture: there is no stress laid there upon this matter, but upon things of a quite different nature.

I now presume, my lord, that every one who has common sense plainly sees, that if this succession of the clergy be to be despised, because it is not expressly required in Scripture; it undeniably follows, that we may reject the Scriptures, as not being a "standing rule of faith in all ages;" we may disuse the sacraments, as not the "ordinary means of grace in all ages;" since this is no more mentioned in the Scriptures, or expressly required, than this uninterrupted succession.

If it be a good argument against the necessity of episcopal ordainers, that it is never said in Scripture, that there shall always be such ordainers; it is certainly as conclusive against the use of the sacraments in every age, that it is no where said in Scripture they shall be used in all ages.

If no government or order of the clergy be to be held as necessary, because no such necessity is asserted in Scripture; it is certain this concludes as strongly against government, and the order itself, as against any particular order. For it is no more said in Scripture, that there shall be an order of clergy, than that there shall be any particular order; therefore if this silence proves against any particular order of clergy, it proves as much against order itself.

Should therefore any of your lordship's friends have so much church-zeal as to contend for the necessity of some order, though of no particular order; he must fall under your lordship's displeasure, and be proved as mere a dreamer and trifler, as those who assert the necessity of episcopal ordination. For if it be plain that there need be no episcopal clergy, because it is not said there shall always be episcopal clergy; it is undeniably plain, that there need be no order of the clergy, since it is no where said, there shall be an order of clergy: therefore whoever shall contend for an order of clergy, will be as much condemned by your lordship's doctrine, as he that declares for the episcopal clergy.

The truth of the matter is this, If nothing is to be esteemed of any moment, but counted as mere trifle and nicety among Christians, which is not expressly required in the Scriptures; then it is a trifle and nicety, whether we believe the Scripture to be a standing rule of faith in all ages, whether we use the sacraments in all ages, whether we have any clergy, at all, whether we observe the Lord's day, whether we baptize our children, or whe-

ther we go to public worship; for none of these things are expressly required in so many words in Scripture. But if your lordship, with the rest of the Christian world, will take these things to be of moment, and well proved, because they are founded in Scripture, though not in express terms, or under plain commands; if you will acknowledge these matters to be well asserted, because they may be gathered from Scripture, and are confirmed by the universal practice of the church in all ages, (which is all the proof that they are capable of) I do not doubt but it will appear, that this successive order of the clergy is founded on the same evidence, and supported by as great authority, so that it must be thought of the same moment with these things, by all unprejudiced persons.

For, my lord, though it be not expressly said, that there shall always be a succession of episcopal clergy, yet it is a truth founded in Scripture itself, and asserted by the universal voice of tradition in the first and succeeding ages of the church.

It is thus founded in Scripture: there we are taught that the priesthood is a positive institution; that no man can take this office unto himself; that neither our Saviour himself, nor his Apostles, nor any other person, however extraordinarily endowed with gifts from God, could, as such, exercise the priestly office, till they had God's express commission for that purpose. Now how does it appear, that the sacraments are positive institutions, but that they are consecrated to such ends and effects as of themselves they were no way qualified to perform? Now as it appears from Scripture, that men, as such, however endowed, were not qualified to take this office upon them without God's appointment; it is demonstratively certain, that men so called are as much to be esteemed a positive institution, as elements so chosen can be called a positive institution. All the personal abilities of men conferring no more authority to exercise the office of a clergyman, than the natural qualities of water to make a sacrament: so that the one institution is as truly positive as the other.

Again. The order of the clergy is not only a positive order instituted by God, but the different degrees in this order is of the same nature. For we find in Scripture, that some persons could perform some offices in the priesthood, which neither deacons nor priests could do, though those deacons and priests were inspired persons, and workers of miracles. Thus Timothy was sent to ordain elders, because none below his order, who was a

bishop, could perform that office. Peter and John laid their hands on baptized persons, because neither priests nor deacons, though workers of miracles, could execute that part of the sacerdotal office.

• Now can we imagine that the Apostles and Bishops thus distinguished themselves for nothing? That there was the same power in deacons and priests to execute those offices, though they took them to themselves? No, my lord; if three degrees in the ministry are instituted in Scripture, we are obliged to think them as truly distinct in their powers, as we are to think that the priesthood itself contains powers that are distinct from those of the laity. It is no more consistent with Scripture, to say that deacons or priests may ordain, than that the laity are priests or deacons. The same divine institution making as truly a difference betwixt the clergy, as it does betwixt clergy and laity.

Now if the order of the clergy be a divine positive institution, in which there are different degrees of power, where some alone can ordain, &c. whilst others can only perform other parts of the sacred office; if this (as it plainly appears) be a doctrine of Scripture, then it is a doctrine of Scripture, that there is a necessity of such a succession of men as have power to ordain. For do the Scriptures make it necessary that Timothy (or some bishop) should be sent to Ephesus to ordain priests, because the priests who were there could not ordain? And do not the same Scriptures make it as necessary, that Timothy's successor be the only ordainer, as well as he was in his time? Will not priests in the next age be as destitute of the power of ordaining as when Timothy was alive? So that since the Scriptures teach, that Timothy, or persons of his order, could alone ordain in that age, they as plainly teach, that the successors of that order can alone ordain in any age, and consequently the Scriptures plainly teach a necessity of an episcopal succession.

The Scriptures declare there is a necessity of a divine commission to execute the office of a priest; they also teach, that this commission can only be had from particular persons: therefore the Scriptures plainly teach, there is a necessity of a succession of such particular persons, in order to keep up a truly commissioned clergy.

Suppose when Timothy was sent to Ephesus to ordain elders, the church had told him, We have chosen elders already, and laid our hands upon them: that if he alone was allowed to exercise this power, it might seem as if he alone had it; or that ministers

were the better for being ordained by his particular hands; and that some persons might imagine they could have no clergy, except they were ordained by him, or some of his order; and that seeing Christ had no where made an express law, that such persons should be necessary to the ordination of the clergy; therefore they rejected this authority of Timothy, lest they should subject themselves to niceties and trifles.

Will your lordship say, that such a practice would have been allowed of in the Ephesians? Or that ministers so ordained, would have been received as the ministers of Christ? If not, why must such practice or such ministers be allowed of in any after ages? Would not the same proceeding against any of Timothy's successors, have deserved the same censure, as being equally unlawful? If therefore the Scripture condemns all ordination but what is episcopal, the Scriptures make a succession of episcopal ordainers necessary. So that I hope, my lord, we shall be no more told that this is a doctrine not mentioned in Scripture, or without any foundation in it.

The great objection to this doctrine is, that this episcopal order of the clergy, is only an apostolical practice; and seeing all apostolical practices are not binding to us, sure this need not.

In answer to this, my lord, I shall first shew, that though all apostolical practices are not necessary, yet some may be necessary. Secondly, That the divine unalterable right of episcopacy is not founded merely on apostolical practice.

To begin with the first: The objection runs thus, "All apostolical practices, are not unalterable or obligatory to us, therefore no apostolical practices are." This, my lord, is just as theological, as if I should say, all Scripture-truths are not articles of faith, or fundamentals of religion, therefore no Scripture-truths are: is not the argument full as just and solid in one case as the other? May there not be that same difference between some practices of the Apostles and others, that there is betwixt some Scripture-truths and others? Are all truths equally important that are to be found in the Bible? Why must all practices be of the same moment that were apostolical? Now if there be any way, either divine or human, of knowing an article of faith, from the smallest truth or most indifferent matter in Scripture, they will equally assist us in distinguishing what apostolical practices are of perpetual obligation, and what are not. But it is a strange way of reasoning that some people are fallen into, who seem to know nothing

of moderation, but jump as constantly out of one extreme into another, as if there was no such thing as a middle way, or any such virtue as moderation. Thus either the church must have an absolute uncontrollable authority, or none at all; we must either hold all apostolical practices necessary, or none at all.

Again, if no apostolical practices can be unalterable, because all are not, then no apostolical doctrines are necessary to be taught in all ages, because all apostolical doctrines are not; and we are no more obliged to teach the death, satisfaction, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, than we are obliged to forbid the eating of blood and things strangled. If we must thus blindly follow them in all their practices, or else be at liberty to leave them in all, we must for the same reason implicitly teach all their doctrines, or else have a power of receding from them all.

For if there be any thing in the nature of doctrines, in the tenour of Scripture, or the sense of antiquity, whereby we can know the difference of some doctrines from others, that some were occasional temporary determinations, suited to particular states and conditions in the church, whilst others were such general doctrines as would concern the church in all states and circumstances; if there can be this difference betwixt apostolical doctrines, there must necessarily be the same difference betwixt apostolical practices, unless we will say, that their practices were not suited to their doctrines. For occasional doctrines must produce occasional practices.

Now may not we be obliged by some practices of the Apostles, where the nature of the thing, and the consent of antiquity shew it to be equally necessary and important in all ages and conditions of the church, without being tied down to the strict observance of every thing which the Apostles did, though it plainly appears, that it was done upon accidental and mutable reasons. Can we not be obliged to observe the Lord's-day from apostolical practice, without being equally obliged to lock the doors where we are met, because in the Apostles times they locked them for fear of their enemies?

My lord, we are to follow the practices of the Apostles, as we ought to follow every thing else, with discretion and judgment, and not run headlong into every thing they did, because they were Apostles, or yet think that because we need not practise after them in every thing, we need do it in nothing. We best imitate them, when we act upon such reasons as they acted upon, and neither

make their occasional practices perpetual laws, nor break through such general rules, as will always have the same reason to be observed.

If it be asked, how we can know what practices must be observed, and what may be laid aside? I answer, as we know articles of faith from lesser truths; as we know occasional doctrines from perpetual doctrines; that is, from the nature of the things, from the tenor of Scripture, and the testimony of antiquity.

Secondly, It is not true, that the divine unalterable right of episcopacy is founded merely upon apostolical practice.

We do not say that episcopacy cannot be changed, merely because we have apostolical practice for it; but because such is the nature of the Christian priesthood, that it can only be continued in that method, which God has appointed for its continuance. Thus, episcopacy is the only instituted method of continuing the priesthood; therefore episcopacy is unchangeable, not because it is an apostolical practice, but because the nature of the thing requires it; a positive institution being only to be continued in that method which God has appointed; so that it is the nature of the priesthood, and not the apostolical practice alone, that makes it necessary to be continued. The apostolical practice indeed shews, that episcopacy is the order that is appointed, but it is the nature of the priesthood that assures us that it is unalterable: and that because an office which is of no significancy, but as it is of divine appointment, and instituted by God, can no otherways be continued, but in that way of continuance which God has appointed.

The argument proceeds thus: The Christian priesthood is a divine positive institution, which as it could only begin by the divine appointment, so it can only descend to after ages in such a method as God has been pleased to appoint.

The Apostles (and your lordship owns, Christ was in all that they did *) instituted episcopacy alone, therefore this method of episcopacy is unalterable, not because an apostolical practice cannot be laid aside, but because the priesthood can only descend to after ages in such a method as is of divine appointment.

So that the question is not fairly stated, when it is asked, whether episcopacy, being an apostolical practice, may be laid aside? But it should be asked, whether an instituted particular method of continuing the priesthood be not necessary to be continued?

Whether an appointed order of receiving a commission from God be not necessary to be observed, in order to receive a commission from him? If the case was thus stated, as it ought to be fairly stated, any one would soon perceive, that we can no more lay aside episcopacy, and yet continue the Christian priesthood, than we can alter the terms of salvation, and yet be in covenant with God.

I come now, my lord, to the second objection. "That this uninterrupted succession is subject to so great uncertainty, that if it be necessary, we can never say that we are in the church."

I know no reason, my lord, why it is so uncertain, but because it is founded upon historical evidence. Let it therefore be considered, my lord, that Christianity itself, is a matter of fact, only conveyed to us by historical evidence.

That the canon of Scripture is only made known to us by historical evidence; that we have no other way of knowing what writings are the word of God; and yet the truth of our faith, and every other means of grace depends upon our knowledge and belief of the Scriptures. Must we not declare the necessity of this succession of bishops, because it can only be proved by historical evidence, and that for such a long tract of time?

Why then do we declare the belief of the Scriptures necessary to salvation? Is not this equally putting the salvation of men upon a matter of fact, supported only by historical evidence, and making it depend upon things done seventeen hundred years ago? Cannot historical evidence satisfy us in one point as well as in the other? Is there any thing in the nature of this succession, that it cannot be as well asserted by historical evidence, as the truth of the Scriptures? Is there not the same bare possibility in the thing itself, that the Scriptures may in some important points be corrupted, as that this succession may be broke? But is this any just reason why we should believe, or fear, that the Scriptures are corrupted, because there is a physical possibility of it, though there is all the proof that can be required of the contrary? Why then must we set aside the necessity of this succession from a bare possibility of error, though there is all the proof that can be required, that it never was broken, but strictly kept up?

And though your lordship has told the world so much of the "improbability, nonsense, and absurdity" of this succession, yet I promise your lordship an answer whenever you shall think fit

to shew, when, or how, or where this succession broke, or seemed to break, or was likely to break.

And till then, I shall content myself with offering this reason to your lordship, why it is morally impossible it ever should have broken in all that term of years, from the Apostles to the present times.

The reason is this; it has been a received doctrine in every age of the church, that no ordination was valid but that of bishops: this doctrine, my lord, has been a constant guard upon the episcopal succession; for seeing it was universally believed that bishops alone could ordain; it was morally impossible, that any persons could be received as bishops, who had not been so ordained.

Now is it not morally impossible, that in our church any one should be made a bishop without episcopal ordination? Is there any possibility of forging orders, or stealing a bishopric by any other stratagem? No, it is morally impossible, because it is an acknowledged doctrine amongst us, that a bishop can only be ordained by bishops. Now as this doctrine must necessarily prevent any one being a bishop without episcopal ordination in our age, so it must have the same effect in every other age as well as ours; and consequently it is as reasonable to believe that the succession of bishops was not broke in any age since the Apostles, as that it was not broke in our own kingdom within these forty years. For the same doctrine which preserves it forty years, may as well preserve it forty hundred years, if it was equally believed in all that space of time. That this has been the constant doctrine of the church, I presume your lordship will not deny; I have not here entered into the historical defence of it, this, and indeed every other institution of the Christian church having been lately so well defended from the ecclesiastical records by a very excellent and judicious writer*.

We believe the Scriptures are not corrupted, because it was always a received doctrine in the church, that they were the standing rule of faith, and because the providence of God may well be supposed to preserve such books, as were to convey to every age the means of salvation. The same reasons prove the great improbability that this succession should ever be broke, both because it was always against a received doctrine to break it, and

* Original Draught of the Primitive Church;

because we may justly hope the providence of God would keep up his own institution.

I must here observe, that though your lordship often exposes the impossibility of this succession, yet at other times, even you yourself, and your advocates assert it. Thus you tell us, "That the papists have one regular appointment or uninterrupted succession of bishops undefiled with the touch of lay-hands *."

Is this succession then such an improbable, impossible thing, and yet can your lordship assure us that it is at Rome? that though it be seventeen hundred years old there, yet that is a true one? Is it such absurdity, and nonsense, and every thing that is ridiculous when we lay claim to it; and yet can your lordship assure us that it is not only possible to be, but actually is in being in the church of Rome? What arguments or authority can your lordship produce to shew that there is a succession there, that will not equally prove it to be here?

You assert expressly, that there is a true succession there; you deny that we have it here; therefore your lordship must mean, that we had not episcopal ordination when we separated from the church of Rome. And here the controversy must rest betwixt you and your adversaries, whether we had episcopal ordination then; for as your lordship has expressly affirmed, that there is this uninterrupted succession in the church of Rome, it is impossible that we should want it, unless we had not episcopal ordination at the Reformation.

Whenever your lordship shall please to appear in defence of the Nag's-head story, or any other pretence against our episcopal ordination when we departed from Rome, we shall beg leave to shew ourselves so far true Protestants, as to answer any Popish arguments your lordship can produce.

Here let the common sense of the laity be once more appealed to: your lordship tells them that an uninterrupted succession is improbable, absurd, and morally speaking, impossible, and, for this reason, they need not trouble their heads about it; yet in another place you positively affirm, that this true uninterrupted succession is actually in the church of Rome; that is, they are to despise this succession, because it never was, or ever can be, yet are to believe that it really is in the Romish church. My lord, this comes very near saying and unsaying, to the great diversion

* Preservative, p. 80.

of the Papists. Must they not laugh at your lordship's Protestant zeal, which might be much better called the spirit of Popery? Must they not be highly pleased with all your banter and ridicule upon an uninterrupted succession, when they see you so kindly except theirs? And think it only nonsense and absurdity, when claimed by any other church? Surely, my lord, they must conceive great hopes of your lordship, since you have here rather chose to contradict yourself, than not vouch for their succession: for you have said it is moral impossible, yet affirm that it is with them.

The third objection against this uninterrupted succession is this, that it is a popish doctrine, and "gives Papists advantage over us."

The objection proceeds thus, "We must not assert the necessity of this succession, because the Papists say it is only to be found with them." I might add, because some mighty zealous Protestants say so too.

But if this be good argumentation, we ought not to tell the Jews or Deists, &c. that there is any necessity of embracing Christianity, because the Papists say Christians can only be saved in their church.

Again we ought not to insist upon a true faith, because the Papists say, that a true faith is only in their communion. So that there is just as much Popery in teaching this doctrine, as in asserting the necessity of Christianity to a Jew, or the necessity of a right faith to a Socinian, &c.

I shall only trouble your lordship with a word or two concerning another point in my former letter. I there proved that your lordship has put the whole of our title to God's favour upon sincerity, as such, independent of every thing else. That no purity of worship, no excellence of order, no truth of faith, no sort of sacraments, no kind of institutions, or any church, as such, can help us to the least degree of God's favour, or give us the smallest advantage above any other communion. And consequently that your lordship has set sincere Jews, Quakers, Socinians, Muggletonians, and all heretics and schismatics upon the same bottom, as to the favour of God, with sincere Christians.

Upon this, my lord, I am called upon to prove that these several sorts of people can be sincere in your account of sincerity. To which, my lord, I make this answer, either there are some sincere persons amongst Jews, Quakers, Socinians, or any kind

of heretics and schismatics, or there are not; if there are, your lordship has given them the same title to God's favour, that you have to the sincerest Christians; if you will say, there are no sincere persons amongst any of them, then your lordship damns them all in the gross; for surely corruptions in religion, professed with unsincerity, will never save people.

I have nothing to do to prove the sincerity of any of them; if they are sincere, what I have said is true; if you will not allow them to be sincere, you condemn them all at once.

Again, I humbly supposed a man might be sincere in his religious opinions, though it might be owing to some ill habits, or something criminal in himself, that he was fallen into such or such a way of thinking. But it seems this is all contradiction; and no man can be sincere, who has any faults, or whose faults have any influence upon his way of thinking.

Your lordship tells all the Dissenters, that they may be easy, if they are sincere; and that it is the only ground for peace and satisfaction. But pray, my lord, if none are to be esteemed sincere, but those who have no faults, or whose faults have no influence upon their persuasions, who can be assured that he is sincere, but he that has the least pretence to it, the proud Pharisee? If your lordship or your advocates were desired to prove your sincerity, either before God or man, it must be for these reasons, because you have no ill passions or habits, no faulty prejudices, no past or present vices that can have any effect upon your minds. My lord, as this is the only proof that any of you could give of your own sincerity in this meaning of it, so the very pretence to it would prove the want of it.

A

REPLY

TO THE

BISHOP OF BANGOR'S ANSWER

TO THE

REPRESENTATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION.

HUMBLY ADDRESSED TO HIS LORDSHIP.

BY WILLIAM LAW, M. A.

MR. LAW'S THIRD LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF BANGOR.

MY LORD,

I BEG leave to trouble your lordship and the world once more with my remarks upon the doctrines you have lately delivered. Your Sermon and Preservative I have already considered in the most impartial manner I could; and shall now examine your answer to the representation of the learned committee, both as it is an answer to that, and as it contains opinions contrary to the fundamental articles of christianity.

I have less need of excusing to your lordship this third address, since you can so easily acquit yourself from the trouble of making any reply to whatever comes from me. It seems I have too small a reputation to deserve your notice; but if the Dean of Chichester would but declare for the doctrines delivered in my letters, and put but a little of his reputation upon the issue, then, you say, you would submit to the employment of an answer*.

My lord, I readily confess that I have neither reputation nor learning, nor any title to recommend me to your lordship's notice; but I must own that I thought the very want of these would, in your opinion, qualify me to make better enquiries into religious truths, and raise your esteem of me as a correspondent in these

* Answer to Condit. of our Saviour vindicated, p. 112.

matters. For you expressly declare, "That if learning or literature is to be interested in this debate, then the most learned man has certainly a title to be the universal judge*." So that no man ought to shew any regard to learning as a qualification in religious disputes, unless he will own that the most learned man has a title to be a Pope, or, as you express it, the universal judge. Yet your lordship, in spite of this Protestant doctrine so lately delivered, has despised and overlooked all my opinions in religion, merely for my want of character and learning, and has promised to undertake the needless task of examining those opinions with another gentleman, merely upon account of his character and reputation. So that though it is perfect popery, and making the most learned man the universal judge, to allow any thing to learning, yet your lordship is so true a Protestant, and pays so great a regard to learning, that you will not so much as examine a doctrine with a person of no character for learning.

Again you say; "Nothing has been seen to administer so many doubts and differences (in religion) as learning †;" and "that none are seen to be less secure from error than learned men."

Now is it not strange, my lord, that after this noble declaration against learning, as the greatest cause of doubts and differences, this extraordinary preference given to ignorance, as a more likely guide to truth, you should despise any one as below your notice in religious disputes, because he wants that learning which so blinds the understanding? Can you ascribe thus much honour to learning, which in your opinion does so much dishonour to religion? - Will you interest those qualities in this debate, which if they are allowed to have any interest in it, will make the man of the greatest abilities the universal judge?

Again; as a farther reason why you have taken no notice of me, you say, "As considerable a writer as Mr. Law is, I hope the committee, as a body, are much more considerable in the Dean's eyes; I am sure they are in mine: and the Dean himself I have thought a much more considerable writer than Mr. Law, and so have spent all my time upon him and the committee."

Now, my lord, though I readily acknowledge this to be exceeding true, and have so far at least a just opinion of myself, as to be afraid to be compared to much less persons than the Dean,

* Answer to Repr. p. 99.

† Ibid. p. 98.

or any of the learned committee, yet, my lord, this reason, which, if urged by any one else, might pass for a good one, cannot be urged by you, without contradicting a principal doctrine maintained in your Answer to the Representation. For there you bid us look into the Popish countries, and see whether one illiterate honest man be not as capable of judging for himself in religion, as all their learned men united; even supposing them met together in a general council, with all possible marks of solemnity and grandeur*.

Here we see a person merely for his want of literature made as good a judge in religion as a general council of the most learned men, acting with the utmost solemnity. We see a council in its utmost perfection contemptuously compared to, and even made less considerable than a private illiterate person. And this we may fairly suppose was intended to shew your contempt of the English convocation. But a few weeks after, when you had another design in your head, you tell us to this purpose, that you disregarded the writings of a single person of no figure in the learned world, to pay your respect to the committee as a body, "which, as such, is much more considerable in your eyes." So that here an illiterate person is made a great judge in religion in regard to a body of learned men, because he is illiterate; and here that same person is made of no consideration in points of religion in regard to a body of learned men, merely because he is private and illiterate.

It will be of no advantage to your lordship to say that you have only replied to the Dean, in relation to me, in the same words that he used to you in relation to Mr. Sykes.

For, my lord, that reply might be proper enough from the Dean, if he judged right of Mr. Sykes's performance; it being very reasonable to overlook an adversary that has neither truth, abilities, or reputation to support his cause.

But though this might be right in the Dean, who pays a true regard to the authority and learning of great men, yet it cannot be defended by your lordship. For though my learning or reputation were ever so low, they are so far from unqualifying me for religious enquiries, that if you would sincerely stand to what you have said, you ought, for the want of these very accomplishments, to esteem me the more, and even chuse me out as a correspondent in this debate.

* Answer to Repr. p. 98.

But however, without any farther regard to the opinion your lordship has either of me or my abilities, I shall proceed to the most impartial examination of your book that I possibly can.

Of the Nature of the Church.

TO begin with your lordship's description of a church; "The number of men, whether small or great, whether dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are subjects to Christ alone in matters of salvation *."

The learned committee calls this your lordship's description of a church.

Your lordship answers: "I wonder to hear this called my description of a church; whereas I pretend in those words to describe no other, but the universal invisible church. It is a description not of *a* church, in our modern way of speaking, but of *the* church, the invisible church of Christ †."

May not we also wonder, my lord; that you should so describe *the* church, that it will not bear being called *a* church? If I should say it is a description of no church, I have your lordship's confession, that it is not *a* church; so that it is something betwixt a church and no church, that is, it is *the* church.

Suppose, my lord, somebody or other should have a mind to be of your church, if he betakes himself to *a* church, he is wrong; you do not mean *a* church, but *the* church. Your lordship owns that this is not a description of a church in the modern way of speaking; I humbly presume to call upon your lordship to shew that it is a description according to the ancient way of speaking. To call the number of believers the invisible church, is a way of speaking no more to be found in the Scriptures, than the company of præadamites.

There is, no doubt of it, an invisible church, i. e. a number of beings that are in covenant with God, who are not to be seen by human eyes; and we may be said to be members of this invisible church, as we are intitled to the same hopes and expectations.

* Serm. p. 17.

† Answer to Repr. p. 70.

But to call the number of men and women who believe in Christ, and observe his institutions, whether dispersed or united in this visible world, to call these the invisible church, is as false and groundless as to call them the order of angels, or the church of seraphims. The profession of Christians is as visible as any other profession, and as much declared by visible external acts; and it is as proper to call a number of men, practising law or physic, an invisible society of lawyers and physicians, as to call the church on earth the invisible church. For all those acts and offices which prove people to be Christians, or the church of Christ, are as visible and notorious as those which prove them to be of any particular secular employment. Would it be proper to call the number of infidels and idolaters the invisible church of the devil? Are they not visibly under the dominion of the powers of darkness? Are they not visibly out of Christ's church? Must it not therefore be as visible who is in this church, as who is not in it?

If any one should tell us that we are to believe invisible Scriptures, and observe invisible sacraments, he would have just as much reason and Scripture of his side as your lordship has for this doctrine. And it would be of the same service to the world to talk of these invisibilities, if the canon of Scripture was in dispute, as to describe this invisible church, when the case is, with what visible church we ought to unite.

Our Saviour himself tells us, that "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." And then says, "so shall it be at the end of the world.*"

This, my lord, is a description of the state of Christ's church, given us by himself. Is there any thing in this description that should lead us to take it for an invisible kingdom, that consists of one particular sort of people invisibly united to Christ? Nay, is it not the whole intent of this similitude to teach us the contrary, that his kingdom is to consist of a mixture of good and bad subjects till the end of the world? The kingdom of Christ is said here to gather its members as a net gathers all kinds of fish; it is chiefly compared to it in this respect, because it gathers of all kinds; which I suppose is a sufficient declaration that this king-

* Matt. xiii. 47.

dom consists of subjects good and bad, as that the net that gathers of every kind of fish, takes good and bad fish. Let us suppose that the church of Christ was this invisible number of people united to Christ by such internal invisible graces; is it possible that a kingdom consisting of this one particular sort of people invisibly good, should be like a net that gathers of every kind of fish? If it was to be compared to a net, it ought to be compared to such a net as gathers only of one kind, viz. good fish, and then it might represent to us a church that has but one sort of members.

But since Christ, who certainly understood the nature of his own kingdom, has declared that it is like a net that gathers of every kind of fish; it is absurd to say, that it consists only of one kind of persons, (viz. the invisibly good) as to say, that the net which gathers of every kind, has only of one kind in it. Farther; "when it was full they drew it to shore, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away; so shall it be at the end of the world." Now as it was the bad as well as the good fish which filled the net, and the church is compared to the net in this respect; so it is evident that bad men as well as good are subjects of this kingdom. And I presume they are members of that kingdom which they fill up, as surely as the fish must be in the net before they can fill it. All these circumstances plainly declare that the church or kingdom of Christ shall consist of a mixture of good and bad people to the end of the world.

Again: Christ declares, "that the kingdom of heaven is like to a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent his servants out into the highways, who gathered together all as many as they found, both good and bad, and the wedding was filled with guests*."

Nothing can be more evident than that the chief intent of this parable is to shew that the church of Christ is to be a mixture of good and bad people to the end of the world. It is like a feast where good and bad guests are entertained; but can it be like such a feast, if only the invisibly virtuous are members of it? If the subjects of this kingdom are of one invisible kind, how can they bear any resemblance to a feast made up of all kinds of guests? Nay, what could be thought of more unlike to this kingdom, if it was such a kingdom as you have represented it?

* Matt. xxii. 2.

How could our blessed Saviour have more directly guarded against such a description of his kingdom as your lordship has given us, than he has done in these parables? He compares it to a quantity of good and bad fish in a net, to a number of good and bad guests at a feast. Are there any words that could more fully declare his meaning to be, that his kingdom consisted of good and bad subjects? Could any one more directly contradict this account of our Saviour, than by saying that his kingdom is an invisible kingdom, consisting of a particular sort of people invisibly virtuous?

Your lordship professes a mighty regard for the Scriptures, and a great dislike to all doctrines that are not delivered there; pray, my lord, produce but so much as one text of Scripture; tell us the Apostle or Evangelist that ever declared the number of believers, whether dispersed or united on earth, to be the universal invisible church; shew us any one passage in Scripture which teaches us, that none are of the church of Christ, but those who have such invisible virtues, and cannot be known to be so.

There is as much authority from Scripture to prove that the church is a kingdom without any subjects, as that they are only of it, who have such invisible graces. And it is as easy to prove from those sacred writings, that neither Christ or his Apostles were ever visible on earth, as that the number of people on earth who believe in Christ constitute the invisible church.

In the parables above mentioned it is out of all doubt that our Saviour describes his universal kingdom or church: it is also certain that the universal invisible church, which you call Christ's church, cannot be this universal church that is made up of a mixture of good and bad members. I therefore beg of your lordship to let us know where Christ has taught us that he has two universal churches on earth; for if you cannot shew that he has declared that he has these two universal churches, you must allow that this which you have described, is a church of your own setting up, not only without any authority, but even against the express word of Scripture.

Your lordship says, that the doctrines which the learned committee have condemned, if they be of that evil tendency, must be so either with regard to the universal invisible church, made up of all those who sincerely in their hearts believe in Christ, or with respect to the universal visible church made up of all, who in all

countries (whether sincerely or insincerely) openly profess to believe in Christ, or with respect to some particular visible church*.

It may be justly expected, my lord, that you should shew us some grounds for this distinction. Where does our blessed Lord give us so much as the least hint that he has founded two universal churches on earth? Did he describe his church by halves when he likened it to a net full of all kinds of fish? Has he any where let us know that he has another universal kingdom on earth besides this, which, in the variety of its members, is like a net full of all sorts of good and bad fish?

Let your lordship, if you can, shew any subtilties in popery which are more of human invention, or more contrary to Scripture, than this refined distinction. The *opus operatum* in the sacraments, the temporal satisfactions for sins, works of superelevation, or any of the nicest arts of jesuitism are not less founded in Scripture than this nice distinction of injuring either the universal invisible, or the universal visible, or a particular visible church. For, my lord, the church of Christ is as truly one and the same church, as the sacrament of baptism is one and the same baptism; and he no more instituted several sorts of churches, than he instituted several kinds of baptism.

Pray, my lord, therefore be no longer angry at human arts in religion; why may not popery have its peculiarities in doctrine as well as your lordship? The church of Rome, with all its additions and corruptions, and pompous ornaments, is as much like the church as it was in the Apostle's times, as your invisible church is like that which Christ declared to be his church. When they set out the church as infallible, they do but reason like your lordship, when you describe it as invisible.

That there are good and bad church-men, is past all doubt; but that people are of the church by means of invisible virtues, is as false as that only good men came to the feast in the Gospel. We are assured that "many are called, but few are chosen;" i. e. that many shall be made members of Christ's church, but few shall be saved; and who these few are that truly work out their salvation, may be invisible to us; but those many that were called, that is, who were in the church, though they did not live up to all the intents of church-communion, yet were as truly of the church, as the bad fish were really in the net.

But to proceed: I shall illustrate this reply of your lordship concerning an universal visible, and universal invisible, and particular visible church, with the following instances.

Let us suppose any one was charged with writing against the sacraments; if he should with your lordship reply, that this charge against him must either relate to universal visible sacraments, or universal invisible sacraments, or particular visible sacraments, he would have just as much Scripture or reason to support that distinction, as your lordship has for dividing the church into universal visible and universal invisible, and particular visible. For the profession of christianity, or church-membership, is as external and visible a thing, as the sacraments are external visible institutions. So that it is as contrary to Scripture, and as mere an human invention to make pretence of an universal invisible church, when the dispute is concerning Christ's church on earth, as it is to have recourse to invisible sacraments, if the question was concerning Christ's sacraments.

They are both equally external and visible; and as the sacraments may be received without any spiritual advantage, so persons may be of the church, and yet not be saved. And as the sacraments are not less sacraments, though they may not convey the designed benefits to the receiver; so neither are such a number of people not of the church, though they do not obtain that salvation which is the intended consequence of church-communion.

Your lordship cannot give any one reason for introducing this distinction with regard to the church, which will not equally hold for the same distinction in regard to the sacraments; and there is exactly the same Quakery and fanaticism in one doctrine as the other.

For as it is the sacraments which chiefly constitute the church, so no distinctions or divisions can with any tolerable propriety be applied to the church, but such as may be also applied to the sacraments that constitute the church. And therefore the terms universal and particular, visible and invisible, have no more to do with Christ's church which he has instituted in this world, than with the two sacraments which he also instituted, baptism, and the supper of the Lord.

Again: if any one was accused of writing against the Christian revelation, he might answer with your lordship, if this accusation be true, it must be so either with regard to God's universal visible

revelation in all the canonical books, or with regard to his universal invisible revelation whereby he speaks inwardly to all sincere people, or with respect to some particular part of his visible revelation. Let all the world judge whether if a person so accused should make this reply, it would not plainly appear either that he was a downright enthusiast, or a crafty dealer in cant and artificial words. I am sure your lordship cannot shew that you have more authority to divide the church on earth into universal visible and universal invisible, and particular visible, than he had to divide the Christian revelation into visible and invisible. Neither was it less to the purpose for such a one to talk of invisible Scriptures, if he was accused of denying the Gospel of St. John, than it is for your lordship under your present accusation to have recourse to the invisible church; but your lordship will find no advantage in this retreat.

Again; suppose a person was charged with writing treason against the government, and in his defence should thus distinguish; the treason that I am charged with against the government, must relate either to universal government in this world, or to universal government in the other world, or to some particular government in this world.

It would be as ingenuous, as sincere, and as pertinent for a person thus accused to talk of governments that had no relation to the case, but in his own imagination, as for your lordship in the present dispute to talk of universal visible, and universal invisible, and particular visible churches. For besides this, that there is no foundation for such a distinction, yet if there was such an invisible church, how is it possible your lordship should hurt it? How is it possible the learned committee should mean to charge you with injuring it? They might as well think your lordship capable of forming a design to arrest a party of spirits, as to attack an invisible church that neither you nor they know any thing of, or where to find.

Your lordship saith, "That if you have unjustly laid any thing down in this description of the invisible church, to the prejudice or injury of any particular visible church, you acknowledge that it is your part to answer for it *."

I believe it appears already that your lordship has a great deal to answer for upon this head; and I shall now farther shew that

* Answer to Rep. p. 70.

you have set up this invisible church in opposition to all other churches whatever. This will appear from the following passage in your sermon: "This enquiry will bring us back to the first, which is the only true account of the church of Christ or kingdom of Christ in the mouth of a Christian, viz. the number of men, whether small or great, &c*."

We have your lordship's confession that you only here pretend to describe the universal invisible church of Christ; you also here plainly declare, that "it is the only true account of Christ's church or kingdom in the mouth of a Christian."

Is not this, my lord, expressly declaring that any other account of Christ's church is not a true one? for you say this is the only true one. Is it not directly affirming that any other description of Christ's church cannot become the mouth of a Christian? for you say that it is the only true one in the mouth of a Christian. So that if we call the universal visible church the church of Christ, we give a false account of Christ's church, and such a one as is unfit for the mouth of a Christian.

Could your lordship have thought of any thing more shocking, than to say that the description of your invisible church is the only true account of Christ's church, and fit for the mouth of a Christian, when our Saviour has given us a quite contrary account of it from his own mouth? He compares it to a net full of good and bad fish, to a feast full of good and bad guests; this surely, my lord, is not an account of your invisible church, where there are only invisible members. Your lordship cannot say that Christ has here described the invisible church; you directly say that your description of the invisible church is the only true account of Christ's church in the mouth of a Christian; and consequently this account which our Saviour himself has given of his church, stands condemned by your lordship as a false account of Christ's church, unfit for the mouth of a Christian. I appeal to the common sense of every reader, whether I have laid any thing to your charge but what your own express words amount to. The short is this; if Christ has in these parables described the universal church as visible, then it is plain that this account of Christ's church is a false one in the mouth of a Christian; for you say your account of the invisible church is the only true account of Christ's church in the mouth of a Christian? so that nothing can

secure this account which our Saviour has given of his church from your lordship's censure, but shewing that it is the very same account of the invisible church that you have given; which I believe is more than your lordship will undertake to prove; it being as hard to prove that a net full of good and bad fish, or a feast full of good and bad guests should represent an invisible kingdom of only one sort of subjects, as that the net and feast, though both full, should represent a kingdom that had not one subject in it.

If a fanatic should describe the Christian sacraments as spiritual and invisible sacraments, and then affirm that that was the only true account of Christian sacraments in the mouth of a Christian, could we charge him with less than writing against all sacraments but invisible sacraments? It is just thus far that your lordship has proceeded against the external visible church: you have declared the invisible one to be the only true church fit to be spoke of by a Christian, which I think is laying down a position highly injurious to the visible church, since it is here condemned as false in the mouth of a Christian.

From all this it appears that the learned committee have justly disliked your lordship's description of the church of Christ.

First; as you describe it as an invisible church, directly contrary to the Scripture representations of it, as given by our Saviour himself.

Secondly; as it is in disparagement of the article of our church, which gives quite another description of the church.

That the church described in the article falls under your lordship's censure, is very plain. For you declare that your description of the invisible is the only true account of Christ's church; therefore the description in the article cannot be a true one, because it is different from yours, which is the only true one.

Secondly; you declare that you consider the church under this description, viz. as invisible, because every other notion of it is made up of inconsistent images*: therefore the account of the church in the article is thus inconsistent.

Now what does your lordship answer here? Only this, that the article speaks of the visible church, and you speak of the invisible one †.

This answer, my lord, proves the charge upon you to be just. For since you own that you describe another church than that

* Serm. p. 10.

† Answer to Rep. p. 78.

which is described in the article, and expressly affirm that your account of this other church is the only true account of Christ's church in the mouth of a Christian; you plainly declare that the other church is a false one in the mouth of a Christian. Yet your lordship rests satisfied with this reply, as if you had cleared yourself by it; whereas this is the very charge itself, that you have described the church otherwise than it is in the article, and have called this different and new account of it the only true account of it; and if it be the only true one, then that which is given in the article must be a false one.

Your lordship goes on, "The article declares what it is that makes every such congregation the visible church of Christ; and I describe what it is that makes every particular man a member of Christ's universal invisible church. The article describes those outward acts which are necessary to make a visible church; and I describe that inward sincerity and regard to Christ himself, which make men members of the invisible church of Christ. And where is the contradiction contained in all this *?"

Suppose, my lord, any one should affirm that there is a sincere, invisible bishop of Bangor, who is the only true bishop of Bangor in the mouth of a Christian. Would your lordship think here was no reflection intended upon yourself? Would you think this account no contradiction to your right as bishop of Bangor? Does your lordship believe such an assertion could come from any one that owned your right to your bishopric, and was a friend to you in it? Would you imagine that nothing was meant against you, because the other bishop was said to be invisible? Your lordship cannot but know, that though he is said to be invisible, yet if he is the only true bishop of Bangor in the mouth of a Christian, then any other bishop of Bangor, whether visible or invisible, must be a false one in the mouth of a Christian.

Thus it is your lordship has dealt with the visible church; you have set another up as the only true church, and yet think all is well; that there is no contradiction, because you call this other an invisible church; whereas if it be the only true church, it contradicts every other church in the highest sense. And though it does not contradict it as a visible church, yet it does as a true church, which is of more consequence.

Your lordship here puts a question in favour of the visible church. "Can it be supposed by this learned body, that a man's

* Answer to Rep. p. 79.

being of the invisible church of Christ, is inconsistent with his joining himself with any visible church *?"

No, my lord, it cannot be supposed. It cannot be supposed by any body that a man's being of the invisible church is inconsistent with his joining himself to the Royal Society or College of Physicians. But pray, my lord, is this all that your invisible church will allow of? Dare your lordship proceed no farther, than only to grant that it is no inconsistency, no contradiction for a member of your invisible church to join with any visible church? If you would sincerely shew that you have said nothing to the prejudice of the visible church, you ought to declare that the members of your invisible church, may not only consistently join with that which is visible, but that it is their duty, and that they are obliged to join with it in order to be of yours that is invisible. For if you have set up an invisible church, which will excuse its members from being of any that is visible, then you have plainly destroyed it, by making it useless. And it is but a poor apology for it to say there is no inconsistency in joining with it, after you have made it needless and unnecessary to join with it. And it will be pretty difficult to give a consistent reason why any person should join himself to a needless church.

Your lordship has here made great discoveries of the nature of your invisible church, which appears to have nothing visible or external in it.

For first, you declare that the article describes one church and you another. But how does this appear? How does your lordship prove this? 1st. "Because the article declares what it is that makes every such congregation the visible church †." Now, my lord, if this shews that the article does not describe your church, then it is plain that the article here describes something that does not belong to your church; for if it equally belonged to your church, it could be no proof that it did not describe your church. But you expressly say that it describes a different church from yours; therefore it must describe something that does not belong to yours.

Now if that which makes any congregation the visible church, be not necessary to make persons members of your church, it follows that they may be members of yours, without being of any visible church.

* Answer to Repr. p. 79.

† Ibid.

Again; another reason why the article does not describe your invisible church is this: because it describes "those outward acts, which are necessary to make a visible church." These outward acts are, the "preaching the pure word of God, and administering the sacraments." Now, my lord, seeing these outward acts shew that the church here described is not your invisible church, does not this evidently declare that such outward acts are not necessary to your church? For if they did equally belong to both churches, and were alike necessary to them, how could they more describe one than another? But you say, it is the mentioning of these outward acts, that shews that your invisible church is not described; therefore it is plain that you do not include these outward acts as essential to your invisible church, and consequently it is a church to which neither public worship, nor visible sacraments are necessary. For if these outward acts are necessary to your invisible church, why does not your lordship mention them as such? You own you describe what it is that makes every particular man a member of the invisible church; yet you not only take no notice of these outward acts, but say that the article describes not your church, because it mentions these outward acts, which is a demonstration that these outward acts do not belong to your church.

Farther; when the learned Committee had charged your lordship with the omission of "preaching the word and administering of the sacraments," you answer, "they might have added, he omits likewise the very public profession of Christianity. And is not the reason plain? because I was not speaking of the visible church; to which alone, as such, visible outward signs, and verbal professions belong: but of the universal invisible church*."

My lord, the reason is very plain, and it is as plain that is not a good reason. For if the preaching of the word, the administering of the sacraments, and the public profession of Christianity, be necessary to make any one a member of your invisible church, then there was as good reason to mention them in your description, as if you had been describing the visible church.

If they are not necessary, then you have set up a church exclusive of the visible church. The case stands thus; if these outward acts be as necessary to make persons be of the invisible as of the visible church, then they ought to come equally into the description

* Answer to Repr p. 80.

of both churches, being equally necessary to both: if you say they are not equally necessary, then you must allow that there is no necessity that the members of your church should be in any external communion.

It is therefore no apology to say that you describe the invisible church, unless you will say that a man may be of it without any outward acts, or communion with any visible church. If a person may be of this invisible church without having any thing to do with visible sacraments, or worship in a visible communion, then you have an excuse why you did not mention these outward professions in your description of the church; but if he cannot be of this invisible communion without observing these outward ordinances, then it was as necessary to mention these outward ordinances in your account of this church, as if you had been describing a church, which consisted of nothing else but outward ordinances.

So that the short of the case is this; if the observation of external ordinances be not necessary to make men members of your invisible church, then indeed there is a plain reason why your lordship should omit them; and it is also plain that this doctrine sets aside the Gospel, if this invisible church, the "only true church in the mouth of a Christian," be excused from Gospel ordinances. But if these external ordinances be necessary to constitute the invisible church, then there was as plain a reason to mention them, in the description of your church, as if you had been describing the visible church.

So that if your lordship will give a good plain reason why you have omitted these outward acts, it must be because they do not belong to it; for otherwise the calling it invisible is no excuse, unless it has no occasion for such outward performances.

And indeed this has appeared to be your doctrine in almost every page, that you set up this invisible church in opposition to outward and visible ordinances: For you all along set out the opposition or difference betwixt the visible and invisible church in respect to external ordinances: thus the one is visible, "because to it alone belong external signs, or verbal professions*." The other is invisible for the want of these. Yet this invisible church thus destitute, and even necessarily destitute of external

* Answer to Repr. p. 81.

ordinances, is by you called, the "only true church in the mouth of a Christian."

One may, I acknowledge, easily conceive in one's mind a number of people, whose internal and invisible graces may entitle them to the favour of God; and these may be called an invisible number, or congregation, or church, because it is invisible to us where it is, or how great it is. But then, my lord, it is a great mistake if this invisible church is opposed to, or distinguished from the visible church in respect of external ordinances. For in these things they are both equally obliged to be visible. And the invisible church is not so called, in contradistinction to those who attend visible communions, and observe external ordinances, but in contradistinction to those who are invisibly bad, and are not what their external profession promises. This is the only number of people or church, which the invisible church is opposed to. For as the invisible church intends a number so called, because of their invisible graces; so this invisibly good church can be truly opposed only to the invisibly bad church, or such as are not such persons inwardly, as they profess to be outwardly.

But, contrary to this, your lordship has all along considered and described this invisible church in opposition to the visible, and made those outward acts which are necessary to the visible church, so many marks to distinguish it from that which is invisible. Thus you say that you "was not speaking of the visible church, to which alone, as such, visible outward signs, or verbal professions belong: but of the universal invisible church*."

Here you plainly make external signs, and outward professions distinguish the visible from the invisible church; whereas it is not invisible in this respect, as being without these external professions, or in contradistinction to a visible church; but it is only invisible in those graces, which human eyes cannot perceive. Thus they are said to be the invisible church, because they are a number of men, who are such inwardly, as they profess to be outwardly. But this shews that they cannot be so called in contradistinction to outward professions, since they must have an outward profession themselves before they can be inwardly sincere in it; and consequently they are not opposed to, or distinguished from a number of outward professors, for this they are obliged to

* Answer to Repr. p. 81.

be themselves, but from a number of outward professors, who are not sincere in what they outwardly profess.

If I should describe charitable men to be an invisible church of persons sincerely well affected to mankind, and this in contradistinction to others who are externally charitable, and perform outward acts of love. Or if I should describe chaste men to be an invisible church of persons inwardly chaste and pure, and this in contradistinction to others externally chaste and visibly pure as to outward acts; I should just have the same authority either from reason or Scripture to set up these invisible churches of charitable and chaste men, in opposition to persons outwardly charitable and chaste, as your lordship has to set up this invisible sincere church in contradistinction to the visible external church. For, first, this sincerity no more makes a church, than charity and chastity make a church, or than honesty makes a man a member of a corporation, or an officer in the army; these being private personal virtues, do not constitute a church or society, but concern men, as men, in every estate of life.

Secondly, Outward ordinances, and visible professions are as necessary to make men true Christians, as outward acts of love, and external purity are necessary to make men charitable or chaste. For Christianity as truly implies external acts and professions, as chastity implies outward purity.

Now, my lord, suppose the question was, whether adultery or fornication, or any other impurity was lawful, and that the world was divided upon this controversy; would he not be an excellent preacher of chastity, that should never tell us whether any or all of these were unlawful, but should pretend to decide the controversy, by telling the world, that chaste men, is an invisible church of persons inwardly pure, and this in contradistinction to persons externally pure? Suppose he should tell them that their title to chastity did not depend upon their being or not being of the number of any outwardly pure or impure persons, but upon their inward purity; what apology could even charity itself make for such a teacher?

The controversy on foot is this; whether external communion with any sort of fanatics be lawful? Whether it be as safe to be in one external visible communion as in another? The world is divided upon this subject, and your lordship comes in to end the controversy. But how? Is it by examining the merits of the contending parties? Is it by telling us what is right and what is

wrong in the different communions? Is it by telling us that one external communion is better than another? Is it by shewing us that any is dangerous? Is it by directing us with which we ought to join, or indeed that we ought so much as to join with any? No: this right and wrong, or good and bad in external communions, though it was the whole question, is wholly skipt over by your lordship; and you preach up an invisible church as the "only true church in the mouth of a Christian," and this in contradistinction to all visible churches: and only declare that our title to God's favour cannot depend upon our being or continuing in any particular method, but upon our sincerity.

Your lordship says; "I have laid down a description of the universal invisible church or kingdom of Christ*." Your lordship had been as well employed if you had been painting of spirits, or weighing of thoughts. "The main question," you say, "is whether this description be true and just †."

This, my lord, is not the main question; nor indeed does it concern us at all whether your lordship is ingenious, or not, in this description.

For suppose your lordship had been describing an invisible king to the people of Great Britain, do you think the main question amongst the lords and commons would be, whether you had hit off the description well? No, my lord, the main question would be, to what ends and purposes you had set up such a king, and what relation the subjects of Great Britain had to him, whether they might leave their visible, and pay only an internal allegiance to your invisible king. If your lordship should farther describe him as the only true king in the mouth of a Briton, I believe it would be thought but a poor apology to appeal to your fine painting, that you had described him justly, and set him out as invisible. The application is here very easy; it is a very trifling question, and only concerns your lordship's parts, whether your description of your invisible church be just or not; but it is the use and end of setting up this church, which is any matter of question to us. Your lordship might erect as many churches as you please, if you did it only for speculative amusement, and to try your abilities in fine drawing; but you pretend to unsettle the Christian church, by your new buildings, or to destroy the distinction between the church and conventicle, by your invisibles,

* Page 78.

† Ibid.

we must beg your lordship's excuse, and can no more admire the beauty or justness of your fine descriptions, than you would admire a just description of an invisible diocese, if it was set out in order to receive your lordship.

You add; "but of this (description) they (the Committee) have not said one word; but rather chosen to go off to an article of the church of England, which defines not the universal invisible church." And your lordship might as well observe, that they have not said one word about Plato's republic. For how they should imagine that you was describing an invisible church, or if they did, why they should trouble their heads with such a description, is not easily conceived.

For, my lord, if it was your primary intention only to appear in defence of an universal invisible church, what can we conceive in our minds more surprizing? What can be more extraordinary than that a visible bishop at a visible court, should with so much solemnity preach in defence of a church which can neither be defended nor injured? Are there any rights in your invisible church which can possibly be lost? If not, to what purpose does your lordship come in as a defender? Can the sight of any men find it, the malice of any men attack it, or the good-will of any men support it? No: yet though it is as invisible as the center of the earth, and as much out of our reach as the stars, yet your lordship has very pathetically preached a sermon and published some volumes, lest this invisible church, which nobody knows where to find, should be run away with.

Should the same Christian zeal induce your lordship to appear at some other solemn occasion in the cause of the winds, your pains would be as well employed; for it would be as reasonable to desire that they might rise and blow where they list, as that an invisible church, no where to be known or found by us at present, may not be injured.

If therefore the learned Committee has so far forgot that visible church of which they are members, as to have engaged with your lordship about your invisible church, the dispute would have been to as much purpose, as a trial in Westminster-hall about the philosopher's stone.

But you complain that they rather chose to go off to an article of the church of England. My lord, this is very hard indeed, that they should go off to the church of England, when you had an invisible church ready for them; or that this learned body ca-

not dispute about churches, but they must needs bring the church of England into the question.

Suppose, as in the above-mentioned instance, your lordship should lay down a fine and just description of your invisible king of Great-Britain, a number of tories should, instead of examining the truth of your description, go off to the acts of settlement, which declare a visible king of Britain: this would be to use your lordship just as the learned Committee have done; who, instead of dwelling upon the beauty and justness of this description, have gone off to an old article in the church of England, which indeed only describes an old-fashioned visible church, as churches went in the Apostle's days: that is, "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered *."

I am of opinion that the apostolical church would not have thought themselves too invisible to be thus described, or that this was too visible a description of the church of Christ to take in its sincere members.

Whether therefore your lordship has given a true description of the invisible church, that is, a church of thoughts and sentiments, I shall not consider, but thus much I must observe, that it is a very false description; first, as it pretends to describe *THE* church †, "and the only true church in the mouth of a Christian." For the church of Christ, as has been shewn, is as truly a visible external society, as any civil or secular society in the world: and it is no more distinguished from such societies by the invisibility, than by the youth or age of its members.

The holy consecrated elements differ from common bread and wine, but they do not so differ from it, as to cease to be as visible as common bread and wine. Thus the holy catholic church, the kingdom of Christ, differs from worldly societies and kingdoms, but not in point of visibility, but in regard to the ends and purposes for which it is erected, viz. the eternal salvation of mankind.

Secondly, This description contradicts the nineteenth article of the church of England. For though it is not set up as another visible church, so as to contradict it in the point of visibility, yet seeing it is described as *THE* church, and "the only true church," it plainly contradicts it in point of truth; for if it be the only true church, every other must be a false one.

* Article 19.

† Answer to Repr. p. 70.

Thirdly, This description is a mere speculative conjecture, a creature of the imagination, which can serve no purposes, but is entirely foreign to the present dispute, and must be so to any dispute which ever can arise between contending communions. It no more serves to inform any one whether he should go to the visible church or visible conventicle, than whether he should study the law or physic. It may indeed serve to make persons regardless of any visible church, but can be of no use to them, if they desire to know with what visible church they ought to join.

It may now be worth our while to observe how your lordship came by this account of Christ's kingdom, which you say is the only true one. "Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world," is the text to your sermon. You say, you "have chosen these words in which our Lord declares the nature of his kingdom *."

Now my lord, one would imagine, that you hereby mean, that our Lord has in these words declared what his kingdom is; for without this, it cannot be true that he hath declared the "nature of his kingdom." Whereas it is so far from being true that he hath in these words declared what his kingdom is, that he has only, and that in one particular respect, declared what it is not. If he had said that his kingdom was not a Jewish kingdom, would this be declaring the nature of his kingdom? If a person should say that his belief was not the belief of the church of England, would he in these words declare the nature of his belief? Would it not still be uncertain whether he was an Arian or Socinian, or something different from them both? Thus our Saviour's saying that his "kingdom is not of this world," no more declares the nature of his kingdom, than a person by saying such a one was not his son, would in these words declare how many children he had.

"My kingdom is not of this world," are very indeterminate words, and capable of several meanings, if we consider them in themselves. But as soon as we consider them as an answer to a particular question, they take one determinate sense. The question was, whether our Saviour was the (temporal) king of the Jews? "Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world." Now as these words may signify no more than the denial of what was asked; as there is nothing in them that necessarily implies

* Sermon, p. 10.

more, than that he was not a king as the Jewish or other temporal kings are ; as the question extends the answer no farther than this meaning ; so if we enlarge it, or fix any other meaning to it, it is all human reasoning, without any warrant from the text.

Now, taking the words in this sense, what a strange conclusion is this that your lordship draws from it: that because Christ said his kingdom was not a temporal kingdom, as the Jewish and other kingdoms were ; therefore his kingdom is invisible. Is it denied to be a temporal kingdom, because a temporal kingdom is visible? If not, it will by no means follow, that it must be invisible, because it is said not to be temporal. Must it be in every respect contrary to a temporal kingdom, because it is said not to be temporal? Then it must have no subjects, because in temporal kingdoms there are subjects ; then there must be no king, because in such kingdoms there are kings. I suppose the sacraments may in a very proper sense be said to be not temporal institutions, though they are as external and visible as any thing in the world ; and consequently the church may be not temporal in a very proper sense, without implying that it must therefore be invisible. Indeed I cannot conceive how your lordship could have thought of a more odd conclusion, than this which you have drawn from them. If you had concluded that because Christ's kingdom is not a temporal kingdom, therefore its members are all of an age ; it had been as well as to say, therefore they are invisible.

Nothing can be more surprizing than to see your lordship throughout your whole sermon describing this kingdom, with all the accuracy and exactness imaginable, and even demonstrating every particular circumstance of its nature, from this little negative, that it is not a temporal kingdom. Your lordship must be very excellent at taking a hint, or you could never have found out this kingdom of God so exactly from so small a circumstance. It seems had this little text been all the Scripture that we had left in the world, your lordship could have revealed the rest by the help of it. For there is nothing that relates to this kingdom, or the circumstances of its members, but you have purely by the strength of your genius, unassisted by any other Scripture, proved and demonstrated from this single passage.

If a foreigner should tell your lordship that his house in his own country was not as the houses are in this kingdom, would it not be very wonderful in your lordship, to be able to demonstrate

its length and breadth, to tell how many rooms there are on a floor, and to describe every beauty and convenience of the structure, merely from having been told that it was not like the houses in this kingdom? But it would not be more wonderful than to see your lordship describe the nature of Christ's kingdom, and explain every circumstance that concerns its members, from having been told this negative circumstance. Nor indeed is it much to be wondered, seeing you set out upon this bottom, if you give as false an account of Christ's kingdom, as you would do of an house, that you only knew what it was not.

Again, you say, "As the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself is King; and in this it is implied, that he is himself the sole Law-giver to his subjects, and himself the sole judge of their behaviour in the affairs of conscience and salvation*."

What a pretty fine-spun consequence is this, to be drawn from the above-mentioned text! Your lordship here advances a mere human speculation founded upon no other authority, than the uncertain signification of the words King and Kingdom; you say it is in this implied, that because Christ is king of his kingdom, he is sole law-giver to his subjects. Pray, my lord, why is it in this implied? Do the words king and kingdom always imply the same thing? Has a king in one kingdom the same powers, which every king hath in another kingdom? Has the king of England the same power which a king of France, or any sovereign hath in his kingdom? Would it be any reason why the king of England should be sole law-giver to his subjects, because there are kings who are sole law-givers to their subjects? Now if the word king does not necessarily imply the same power in every kingdom, how can there be any conclusion, that because Christ is king of his kingdom, he is sole law-giver to his subjects? Yet your lordship's whole argument is founded upon this weak and false bottom, that the word king is to be taken in one absolute and fixed sense: for you expressly say it is in this implied, that because he is king, he is sole law-giver. Now it is impossible it should be implied in this, unless the word king always implies the same power: for if there be any difference in the constitutions of kingdoms, though they all have kings, then it is plain nothing certain as to the nature and condition of any kingdom can be drawn from its

having a king. But your lordship has described the constitution of Christ's kingdom, the circumstances of its subjects, and in short every thing that can concern it, as absolutely, and with as much certainty, from Christ's being king of it, as if the word king had but one meaning, or every king the same power.

Again, you tell us; "The grossest mistakes in judgment about the nature of Christ's kingdom or church, have arisen from hence, that men have argued from other visible societies, and other visible kingdoms of this world, to what ought to be visible and sensible in his kingdom."

Is it thus, my lord? Are all our gross errors owing to this way of reasoning? How then comes your lordship to fall into this grossest of errors? How come you to state the very nature of Christ's kingdom from the consideration of temporal kingdoms, or absolute monarchies? How come you to argue from the relation between a king and his kingdom, to what ought to be in Christ's spiritual kingdom? Are not kings and kingdoms temporal institutions? Is not the relation betwixt a king and his kingdom a temporal relation? How then can you argue from these temporal kingdoms to any thing concerning Christ's kingdom? Why will your lordship fall into so gross an error, as to assert that Christ must be sole law-giver to his subjects, because there are some temporal kings who are sole law-givers to their subjects? Is there any consequence in this argument? Nay, are not all our errors owing to this mistaken way of arguing?

The only way to know the constitution of this kingdom, is not to reason from what is implied in the words king and kingdom, for they do not imply any fixed or absolute sense, but from the laws and institutions of it, whether they admit of or require the authority of under magistrates. Thus, if it appears that Christ has commissioned others to act in his name, to exercise authority in his kingdom, and govern his subjects in such a manner as he has commissioned them to govern; is it any answer to this, to say that the church is a kingdom, and Christ is a king, and consequently sole law-giver in it? Is there nothing in this text, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, &c." because Christ is king of his church?

The whole scheme of all your doctrines is raised out of this single text, "My kingdom is not of this world;" which certainly implies no more than if Christ had said, "I am not the temporal king of the Jews." Let us therefore see how your lordship's doc-

trines appear, if we bring them to the principle from whence you had them: as thus, Jesus is not the temporal king of the Jews, therefore there is no such thing as church authority, no obligation to join in any particular communion. Jesus is not the temporal king of the Jews, therefore absolutions, benedictions, and excommunications are dreams and trifles; therefore no succession or order of clergy is better than another.

Jesus is not the temporal king of the Jews, therefore the invisible church is the only true church in the mouth of a Christian; therefore sincerity alone, exclusive of any particular communion, is the only title to God's favour. Now if the Papists should say, Jesus is not the temporal king of the Jews, therefore there is a purgatory, therefore we are to pray to saints; they would shew as much true logic and divinity as your lordship has shewn in the proof of your doctrines from the above-mentioned text. And I dare say, that every reader of this controversy knows that you have not pretended to any other proof from the Scriptures for your doctrine, than what your oratory could draw from this single text.

This, therefore, I hope every reader will observe, that all which you have advanced against the universally received doctrines of christianity, is only an harangue upon this single text, which every one's common sense will tell him contains nothing in it that can possibly determine the cause which you are engaged in. For who can imagine that it is as well to be a sincere Turk as a sincere Christian; or that a sincere Quaker is as much in the favour of God as a sincere churchman, because our blessed Lord told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world; and that in such a manner, and upon such an occasion, as only to imply that he was not that king which he enquired after? Who can conceive that there is no particular order of the clergy necessary, no necessity of any particular communion, no authority in any church, nor any significancy in the sacerdotal powers, for this reason, because there is a text in Scripture which denies that Christ was the temporal king of the Jews.

Your lordship has said much of the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel, and of its peculiar fitness to be judged of, by the ordinary common sense of mankind; you have also interposed in this controversy, to deliver them from the authority of the church, and turn them loose to the Scriptures. But, my lord, if this text, "My kingdom is not of this world," which seems to common sense to contain only the denial of a particular question, con-

tains, as you have pretended, the whole Christian religion; and every other seemingly plain part of the Gospel is to take its meaning from this passage; if it be thus, my lord, what can we conceive more mysterious than the Scripture? or more unequal to the common, ordinary sense of men?

For how should it come into a plain honest man's head, that this text, which is nothing but the denial of a certain question, should be the key to all the rest of Scripture? How should he know that the plainest texts in Scripture were not to be understood in their apparent meaning, but in some sense or other given them from this text? Thus, when it is said, "Go ye and disciple all nations, and lo I am with you to the end of the world." The first apparent sense of these words is this, that as Christ promised to be with the Apostles in the execution of their office both as to authority and power, so he promises the same to their successors the bishops, since he could no otherwise be with them to the end of the world, than by being with their successors. Now, my lord, how should an ordinary thinker know that this plain meaning of the words was to be neglected, and that he was to go to the above-mentioned text to learn to understand, or rather disbelieve them? For what is there in this text, "My kingdom is not of this world," to shew either that Christ did not authorize the Apostles to ordain successors, who should have his authority, or that the bishops alone are not such successors? Is there any thing in this text which can any way determine the nature, the necessity, or the significancy of such a succession?

Again it is said, "that there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby they may be saved, but Jesus Christ." Now how should a man that has only common sense imagine, that he must reject this plain meaning of the words, and believe that a sincere Turk is as much in the favour of God as a sincere Christian, for this only reason, because Christ's kingdom is not of this world? It must not be common ordinary sense which can reason and discover at this rate.

Lastly, it is said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, &c." Now how shall any one that has only sober sense find out, that there is nothing at all left in this text, that it only gave something or other to the Apostles, but gives no authority to any persons now, because the kingdom of Christ is not of this world?

Our Saviour told his disciples that they were not of this world; but is that an argument that they therefore became immediately invisible? Was neither St. Peter nor St. Paul, &c. ever to be seen afterwards? Why then must the kingdom of Christ become immediately invisible because it is said not to be of this world any more than its first members were invisible, who were also declared to be not of this world?

Had St. Peter and St. Paul no visible power and authority over the presbyters and deacons, because they were not of this world? If they had, why may not some persons have authority over others in Christ's kingdom, though it is not of this world?

For our blessed Lord's saying that his disciples were not of this world, does as strictly prove that St. Peter and St. Paul had no distinct powers from presbyters and deacons, as his saying that his kingdom was not of this world, proves that there is no real or necessary difference betwixt bishops and presbyters in his kingdom. And it is as good logic to say the disciples of Christ were not of this world, therefore there was no necessity that some should have been Apostles, and others presbyters, &c. as to say Christ's kingdom is not of this world, therefore there is no necessity that some should be bishops, and others presbyters in it.

I have been the more particular in examining the text to your sermon, and bringing your doctrines close to it, that every reader who has common sense may be able to perceive that they have no more relation to that text from which you be thought to have them, than if you had deduced them from the first verse in the first chapter of Genesis.

And yet thus much every reader must have observed, that it is your explication of this text alone, which has led you to condemn all that authority, to censure all those institutions as dreams and trifles which the Holy Scriptures, and the first and purest ages of christianity have taught us to esteem as sacred in themselves, being ordained by God; and of the greatest benefit to us, being means of obtaining his grace and favour.

Thus far concerning the nature of Christ's church.

Of Church Authority.

I COME now to consider what your lordship has delivered upon the article of church authority, as it is invested in the governors of the church. And here I have little else to do, but to clear it from those false characters under which you have been pleased to describe it.

Thus you begin: "If there be an authority in any to judge, censure, or punish the servants of another master, in matters purely relating to conscience and eternal salvation; then Christ has left behind judges over the consciences and religion of his people; then the consciences and religion of his people are subject to them whom he has left judges over them; and then there is a right in some Christians to determine the religion and consciences of others. And what is more, if the decisions of any men can be made to concern or affect the state of Christ's subjects with regard to the favour of God, then the salvation of some Christians depends upon the sentence passed by others*."

Here is the sum of what you have advanced from reason and the nature of the thing against the authority of church governors; which you would have pass for a strict proof, that if they have any authority in matters purely relating to conscience derived to them from Christ, that then their authority can damn or save at pleasure.

But, my lord, in this same strict way of reasoning, and by only using your own words, I will as plainly prove that a father hath not authority even to send his children of an errand.

For, "If the Christian religion authorises a father to judge the servants of another master in matters purely relating to motion, then Christ has left behind him judges over the motion of his people, then the motion of his people is subjected to them whom he has left judges over it, and then there is a right in some Christians to determine the motion of others. And what is more, if the determinations of any men can concern or affect the state of Christ's subjects with regard to motion, then the lives of some Christians depend upon the determination passed by others;

* Answer to Repr. p. 27.

because they may determine them to move from the top of a precipice to the bottom."

Here, my lord, I freely leave it to the judgment of common sense, whether I have not in your own words proved it as absurd and unreasonable that a father should have any power over his son, so as to send him of an errand, as to allow the church to have authority in matters of conscience and salvation; and the consequence, according to your argument, is equally dreadful in both cases: for it is as plain that if fathers have authority in matters of motion, then they may move their sons to the bottom of a precipice; as that if the church hath authority in matters of salvation, then it may save or damn at pleasure; and it is as well proved that fathers have no authority in matters of motion, because they have no authority to command their children to destroy themselves, as that the church hath no authority in matters of conscience and salvation, because they have not an authority to damn people for ever: for there is the same room for degrees in the authority of the church, which there is for degrees in the authority of parents; and it is as justly concluded that parents have no authority in matters of any particular nature, because they have not unlimited authority in things of that particular nature, as that the church hath no authority in matters of conscience and salvation, because it has not an absolute unlimited authority in these matters.

Yet this is the whole of your argument against church authority, that it cannot relate to matters of conscience and salvation, because an authority in these matters is an absolute authority over the souls of others; which is just as true, as if any one should declare that a father hath no authority in matters purely relating to the body of his son, because an authority in these matters is an absolute authority to dispose of his body as he pleases.

Suppose it should be said that a father hath authority over his son in civil affairs; will it be an argument that he hath no such authority, because he has not all, or an unlimited authority in civil affairs? Will it be an argument that he has no authority in such matters, because his son is not wholly and entirely subjected to him in such matters? Has a father no right to choose an employment for his son, or govern him in several things of a civil nature, because he cannot oblige him to resign his title to his estate, or take from him the benefit of the laws of the land?

If he has an authority in these matters, though not all, why cannot the governors of the church have an authority in matters of conscience, though they have not all, or an unlimited authority in matters of conscience? How does it follow that they have no such authority, because Christians are not wholly and absolutely subjected to them in such matters? Why can there not be bounds to an authority in matters of conscience, as well as bounds to an authority in civil affairs? And if a father may have authority over his son in civil affairs, though that authority is limited by the laws of the land, and the superior authority of the civil magistrate; why may not the church have an authority in matters of conscience and salvation, though that authority is limited by the Scriptures, and the supreme authority of God?

He therefore who concludes the church hath no authority in matters of salvation, because it cannot absolutely save or damn people, reasons as strictly as he who concludes a person has no authority in civil affairs, because he cannot grant or take away civil privileges of the highest nature.

What therefore your lordship has thus logically advanced against the authority of the church, concludes with the same force against all authority in the world. For if the church hath no authority in matters of conscience, for this demonstrative reason, because it hath not an unlimited authority in matters of conscience, then it is also demonstrated that no persons have any authority in any particular matters, because they have not an absolute unbounded authority in those particular matters.

As thus: a prince hath no authority to oblige his subjects to make war against such a people, because he had not unlimited authority to oblige his subjects to fight where, and when, and with whom he pleases.

A father hath no authority over the persons or affairs of his children, because he cannot dispose of the persons and affairs of his children in what manner he will.

Masters have no authority to command the assistance of their servants, because they cannot oblige them to assist in a rebellion or robbery.

Thus are all these particular authorities as plainly confuted by your argument, as the authority of the church is confuted by it.

But now, my lord, have neither masters, nor fathers, nor princes, any authority in these particular matters, because they have no

authority to command at any rate, or as they please in these matters? If they have, why may not the governors of the church have an authority in matters of conscience though they cannot oblige conscience at any rate, or as they please? Why may not they have an authority in matters of salvation, though they have not power absolutely to damn or save?

Your lordship would therefore have done as much justice to truth, and as much service to the world, if, instead of calling Christians from the authority of the church, you had publicly declared that neither masters, nor fathers, nor princes, have, properly speaking, any real authority over their respective servants, sons, and subjects, and that because they are none of them to be obeyed but in such and such circumstances, and upon certain supposed conditions. For you have plainly declared there is no authority in the church, that it has no power of obliging, because we are only to obey upon terms and certain supposed conditions. If therefore this conditional obedience proves that there is, properly speaking, no authority in the church, then that conditional obedience of servants, sons, and subjects, proves that neither their masters, fathers, or princes, have any authority properly speaking.

You say; "If there be a power in some *over* others in matters of religion, so as to determine these others, then all communions are upon an equal foot, without any regard to any intrinsic goodness; or whether they be right or wrong; then no religion is in itself preferable to another, but all are alike with respect to the favour of God *."

Now, my lord, all this might, with as much truth, be said of any other authority, as of church authority.

As thus: "If there be a power in the prince, or in some *over* others in matters of war and fighting, so as to determine those others, then all wars and fightings are upon an equal foot, without any regard to any intrinsic goodness; or whether they be right or wrong; then no wars or fightings are in themselves preferable to others, but all are alike with respect to the favour of God."

And now, my lord, what must we say here? Has the prince no right or power to command his subjects to wage war with such a people? Or if he has this power over them, does this make all wars alike? Does this authority leave nothing to the justice or

equity of wars, but make all wars exactly the same with regard to the favour of God?

Does this authority of the prince make all engagements equally lawful to the subject that engages by his authority? Is he neither more or less in the favour of God, for whatever cause he fights in, because he has the authority of his prince? Is it as pleasing to God that under such authority he should make war upon the innocent, plunder and ravage the fatherless and widows, as engage in the cause of equity and honour?

Now, my lord, if all wars are not alike to the persons who are concerned in them, as to the favour of God; if there can be any cases supposed, where it is not only lawful, but honourable and glorious for soldiers to disobey the orders of their prince; then it is past doubt, that soldiers may and ought to have some regard to the nature and justice of the orders they have from their prince.

But we have your lordship's assurance, that if they may have any regard to the nature and justice of their orders, then there is an end of all authority, and an end of all power of one man over another in such matters.

So that you have as plainly confuted all authority of the prince over his soldiers in matters purely military, as you have confuted all authority of the church in matters purely of conscience. For it is plain to every understanding, that if there is an end of all authority in religion, because persons may have some regard to the intrinsic goodness of things*, that therefore there is an end of all regal authority over soldiers, if soldiers may have any regard to the nature and justice of their military orders.

Your argument against church authority consists of two parts; the first part is taken from the nature of authority, and proceeds thus: "If there be an authority in matters of conscience, it must be an absolute authority over conscience, so as to be obeyed in all its commands, of what kind soever;" which is as false as if it were said, that if a father hath authority over the person of his son, then he hath an absolute authority to do what he will with his person; or if he hath authority over his son in civil affairs, then he hath an absolute unlimited authority in the civil affairs of his son.

* Answer to Repr. p. 115.

The other part of your argument is taken from the nature of obedience, and proceeds in this manner: "If persons may have some regard to the intrinsic goodness of things in religion, then there is an end of all authority in matters of religion; which is as false as to say that if a soldier may have some regard to the nature and justice of the military orders of his prince, then there is an end of all authority of the prince over his soldiers in military affairs; or if a servant may have some regard to the lawfulness of the commands of his master, then there is an end of all authority of masters over their servants as to such matters."

So that if there be such thing as authority either in masters, or fathers, or princes, then both parts of your argument are confuted; for none of these have any other than a limited authority, nor do their respective servants, sons, or subjects, owe them any other active obedience, but such as is conditional.

Now if it can be any way proved that obedience to our masters, parents, and princes is a very great duty, and disobedience a very great sin, though they cannot oblige us to act against the laws of God, or the laws of our country; then it will follow that obedience to our spiritual governors may be a very great duty, and disobedience a very great sin, though they cannot oblige us to submit to their sinful or unlawful commands.

And if common reason, the laws of God and our country be sufficient to direct us where to stop in our active obedience to our masters, fathers, or princes, though they have authority from God to demand our obedience, the same guides will with the same certainty teach us where to stop in our obedience to the authority of the church, though that authority be set over us by God himself.

Though this might be thought sufficient to shew the weakness of your arguments against the authority of the church, yet I shall beg leave to examine them a little farther in another manner.

You say the authority which you deny, is only an authority in matters relating purely to conscience and eternal salvation, an authority whose laws and decisions affect the state of Christ's subjects with regard to the favour of God; and the reason of your denying it is this; that if this authority, or laws, or decisions of men can concern or affect the state of Christ's subjects with regard to the favour of God, then the eternal sal-

vation of some Christians depends upon the sentence passed by others*.

In order to lay open the weakness of this reasoning, I shall state the meaning of the propositions of which it consists.

And first, I suppose an authority may be properly said to affect the state of people with regard to the favour of God, when their obedience to such an authority procures his favour, and their contempt of it raises his displeasure; and I believe that this is not only a proper sense, but the only proper sense which the words are capable of.

It is certainly true that the authority of our blessed Saviour was an authority which affected the state of the Jews with regard to the favour of God; but yet it no otherwise affected their state, than as their obedience to his authority was pleasing to God, and their disobedience to it the cause of his farther displeasure. This is the only way in which the authority of Christ affected the state of people with regard to the favour of God; and therefore is the only manner in which any other authority can be supposed to affect persons with regard to the favour of God.

Secondly; any things or matters may be properly said to relate to conscience and eternal salvation, when the observance of them is a means of obtaining salvation, and the neglect of them an hindrance to our salvation. Thus baptism, and the supper of the Lord, are matters relating to conscience and eternal salvation; but then they are only so for this reason, because the partaking of these sacraments is a means of obtaining salvation, and the refusal of them is an hindrance of our salvation. He therefore who hath authority in such things, as by our observing of them we promote our salvation, and by our neglecting of them we hinder our salvation, he has in the utmost propriety of the words, an authority in matters of conscience and salvation.

Hence it appears that it is not peculiar or appropriate to the authority of the church alone, to relate to matters of conscience and eternal salvation, but equally belongs to every other authority which can be called the ordinance of God.

Now all lawful authority, whether of masters, fathers, or princes, is the ordinance of God; and the respective duties of their servants, children, and subjects, are as truly matters of conscience and eternal salvation, as their observance of any part of

the Christian religion is a matter of conscience and eternal salvation: and it is not more their duty to receive the sacrament, or worship God in any particular manner, than to obey their respective governors; nor does it more concern or affect their state with regard to the favour of God, whether they neglect those duties which particularly regard his service, or those duties which they owe to their proper governors. So that conscience and eternal salvation is equally concerned in both cases.

For things may as well be matters of conscience and eternal salvation, though they are of a civil or secular nature, as the positive institutions of Christ are matters of conscience and salvation.

For baptism has no more of religion in its own nature, nor has of itself any more concern with our salvation, than any action that is merely secular or civil. But as baptism by institution becomes our duty, and so is a matter of conscience and salvation, so when actions merely secular and indifferent are by a lawful authority made our duty, they are as truly matters of conscience and salvation, as any parts of religion.

The difference between a spiritual and temporal authority does not consist in this, that one relates to matters of conscience and salvation, and concerns and affects our state with regard to the favour of God, and the other does not; but the difference is this, that one presides over us in things relating to religion and the service of God, the other presides over us in things relating to civil life; and as our salvation depends as certainly upon our behaviour in things relating to civil life, as in things relating to the service of God, it follows that they are both equally matters of conscience and salvation: and as the temporal authority is the ordinance of God, to which we are to submit, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake, it undeniably follows that this temporal authority as truly concerns and affects our state with regard to the favour of God, as any authority in matters purely relating to religion. For such an authority could in no other sense affect our state with regard to the favour of God, than by our obedience or disobedience to it; but our state with regard to the favour of God is as truly affected by our obedience or disobedience to our lawful sovereign, as by our observing or neglecting any duty in the world; and consequently the temporal authority as truly affects our state with regard to the favour of God, as any authority in matters of religion.

Seeing therefore by an authority in matters of conscience and salvation, by an authority which can affect our state with regard to the favour of God, nothing more is implied than an authority to which our obedience is a duty, and our disobedience a sin, which is the case of every lawful authority; it plainly appears, that all those frightful consequences, those dangers to the souls of men, which you have charged upon such church authority, are as truly chargeable upon masters, fathers, and princes, and makes their several authorities as dangerous powers over the salvation of others, as the authority of the church.

Thus, when your demonstration proceeds in this manner; if there be an authority in some over others in matters purely relating to conscience and salvation, then the salvation of some people will depend upon others. Which, if we set in a true light, ought to proceed thus; if there be an authority in matters of religion, to which our obedience is a duty, and our disobedience a sin, then the salvation of some people depends upon others.

But, my lord, what a sagacity must he have who can see this dismal consequence? Who can see that masters, fathers, and princes have a power over the souls of others, either to damn or save them, because obedience to their authority is a duty, and disobedience a sin?

Your lordship cannot here say, that an authority in matters purely relating to conscience and eternal salvation, is not expressed high enough, by being described as an authority to which our obedience is a duty, and our disobedience a sin. For, my lord, no authority, however concerned in things of the greatest importance in religion and salvation, can possibly be an authority of an higher nature, than that authority to which our obedience is a duty, and our disobedience a sin. It was in this sense alone that the authority of our Saviour himself affected the state of the Jews with regard to the favour of God; his authority was of an high and concerning nature to them only for this reason, because their obedience to it was their duty, and their disobedience their sin.

If we now consider this authority in the church in this true manner in which it ought to be considered, your lordship's argument against it either proves a deal too much, or nothing at all.

Thus, if the consequence be just, that if it be sin to disobey the church, then the church hath a power of damning us; then

it is as good a consequence in regard to other authority : as thus ; it is a sin to disobey our parents, therefore our parents have a power of damning us ; it is a sin to disobey our prince, therefore our prince has a power of damning us. These consequences are evidently as just and true, as that other drawn from church authority ; so that all those dismal charges which you have fixed upon church authority, are as false accounts of it, as if you had asserted that every father, or master, or prince, who demands obedience from his child, servant, or subject, in point of duty, or by declaring that their disobedience is a sin, does thereby prove himself to be a pope, and to have the souls of others at his disposal : for it is out of all doubt, that if the governors of the church, by demanding obedience to them in point of duty, or by declaring disobedience to be sin, do thereby assert the claims of popery, and assume a power to dispose of the souls of the people ; that any other authority which requires this obedience as a duty of conscience, and forbids disobedience as sin, does thereby claim the authority of the pope, and pretend to a power over the souls of others.

So that if your lordship has destroyed church authority, which pretends obedience to be a duty, as a popish claim ; you have also as certainly destroyed every other authority which demands obedience as a duty, as being equally a popish presumption.

Whenever therefore you shall please to call away servants, children, or subjects, from their respective masters, fathers, and princes, you have as many demonstrations ready to prove them all Papists, if they will stick by their obedience to them as a duty of conscience, and to prove their governors all popes, if they declare their disobedience to be sin, as you have to prove church authority to be a popish claim. And I must beg leave to affirm, that they are as much misled who follow your lordship against the authority of the church, as if they should follow you in the same argument against owning any authority of their parents and princes.

The intent of all this is only to shew, that though there is an authority in the church to which our obedience is a duty, and our disobedience a sin (which is as high an authority as can be claimed) yet this authority implies no more a frightful power of disposing of our souls, than any other lawful authority, which is a sin to disobey, implies such a power.

For where is the danger to our souls? How is our salvation made subject to the pleasure of our church governors, because God has appointed them to direct us in the manner of worshipping him, and to preside over things relating to religion, and made it our duty to obey them? How does this imply a dangerous power over our salvation? If we sin against this authority, we endanger our salvation, as we do by neglecting any other ordinance of God: and our damnation is no more effected by any power in the persons, whom we may be damned for disobeying, than a person that is damned for killing his father, is damned by any power of his father's.

Neither is it in the power of the governors in the church, though they have authority in matters of salvation, to make our salvation any more difficult to us, than if they had no such authority.

For all their injunctions must be either lawful or unlawful; if they are lawful, then by our obedience to an ordinance of God, we recommend ourselves to the favour of God; and sure there is no harm in this authority thus far. And if their commands are unlawful, then, by our not obeying them, we still please God, in chusing rather to obey him than men, where both cannot be obeyed. And where, my lord, is the terror of this authority so much complained of? How does this make our salvation lie at the mercy of our church governors? We are still as truly saved or damned by our own behaviour, as though they had no such authority over us; and though we may make their authority the occasion of our damnation, by our rebelling against it, yet it is only in such a manner as any one may make baptism, or the supper of the Lord, the occasion of his damnation, by a profane refusal of them.

Upon the whole of this matter, it appears, first, that when the authority of the church is said to be an authority in matters of conscience and salvation, or an authority which concerns and affects our state with regard to the favour of God; that this is the only true meaning of those propositions, viz. an authority in matters of religion, to which obedience is a duty, and disobedience a sin.

Secondly; That this authority, to which we are thus obliged, is as consistent with our working out our own salvation, and no more puts our souls into the disposal of such authority, than our salvation is at the mercy of our parents and princes, be-

cause to obey their authority is a great duty, and to disobey it, a great sin.

Your lordship has yet another argument against church authority, taken from the nature of our reformation, which it seems cannot be defended, if there was then this church authority we have been pleading for.

Thus you say; "If there be a church authority, I beg to know, how can the Reformation itself be justified *?"

My lord, I cannot but wonder this should be a difficulty with your lordship, who has writ so famous a treatise to inform people how they not only may, but ought in point of duty to get rid of a real authority; I mean in your Defence of Resistance.

I suppose it is taken for granted, that James the second was king of England, that he had a regal authority over all the people of England, and that they all of what station soever were his subjects; yet granting this regal authority in him, and this state of subjection in all the people of England, your lordship knows how to set aside that government, and set up another government; and even to make it our duty as men and Protestants to set up another government.

Now since you know how to get rid of this authority in so Christian and Protestant a manner, one cannot but wonder how you should be at a loss to justify the Reformation, without supposing that the church at that time had no authority.

For did you ever justify the Revolution, because James the second had no kingly authority, or that the people of England were not his subjects? Nay, did you not defend it upon the quite contrary supposition, that though James the second had a regal authority, though all the people of England were his subjects, and had sworn to be his faithful subjects, yet, in spite of all these considerations, did you not assert that they not only might, but ought to set him aside and chuse another governor in his stead?

And yet after all this, you know not how to defend the Reformation, it is a perfectly lost cause, and not a word to be said for it, unless we suppose that there was no authority in the church when we reformed from it. Surely if your lordship loved to defend the Reformation, as well as you loved to defend the Revolu-

* Answer to Repr. p. 117.

tion, you would not have so many reasons for one, and none for the other.

For supposing an authority in the church, will not tyranny, breach of fundamentals, and unlawful terms of communion, defend our departure from a real authority in the church, as well as any grievances or oppressions will defend our leaving a real authority in the state ?

What a pitiful advocate, what a betrayer of the rights of the people would you reckon him, who should say, If there was any regal authority in James the second, if the people of England were his subjects; I beg to know, how can the Revolution itself be justified ?

Yet just such an advocate are you, just such a betrayer of the Reformation; you cannot defend it, it has no bottom to stand upon; and if there was any authority in the church before the Reformation, you beg to know, "how the Reformation itself can be justified?"

My lord, I do not urge this to shew either that the Revolution and Reformation are equally justifiable, or that they both are to be justified upon the same reasons: but to shew that your lordship from your own principles needed not to have wanted as good reasons for the Reformation, as you have produced for the Revolution, even supposing the church of Rome had as real an authority over us as James the second had, and that we were as truly in a state of subjection to that church before the Reformation, as we were in a state of subjection to that king before the Revolution.

Again, you proceed thus; "For there was then (at the time of the Reformation) a church, and an order of churchmen, vested with all such spiritual authority, as is of the essence of the church. There was therefore a church authority to oblige Christians: and a power in some over others. What was it therefore to which we owe this very church of England*?"

Now, my lord, I hope you will grant, that just at the time of the Revolution, "there was then a king, vested with all such civil authority as is of the essence of a king. There was therefore a regal authority to oblige the people of England, and a power in one over others. What was it therefore to which we owe this very Revolution in England?"

I suppose you will say that we owe it, not to any want of authority in the late king James, but to his abuse of his authority: why therefore is it not as easy to account for the Reformation, not from the want, but the abuse of authority in the church of Rome? Is it an argument that the people of England were no subjects, under no government, nor had any king, because they would no longer submit to the oppressions and grievances of a late reign, but asserted their liberties, and appealed to the conditions of the original contract?

If not, why is it an argument that the church had no authority, because some years ago the people of England would no longer submit to the corruptions and unlawful injunctions of the church of Rome, but appealed to the Scriptures, and the practice of the first and purest ages of Christianity?

If your lordship was so entirely consistent with yourself as you tell us you are; if you never pursued an argument farther than the plain reason of it led you; how is it possible that you, who have so strenuously defended the resistance of people against a legal king *, (for so you expressly call him) should declare that our separation from the church of Rome cannot be justified, without supposing that the church of Rome had never any authority over us?

For supposing that church had been really our sovereign in affairs of religion, is it not strange that you, who have asserted that our "present settlement is owing entirely to the taking up arms, and adhering to such as were in arms against their sovereign †," should yet declare that our opposing the church of Rome, cannot be justified but by supposing, that she never had any sovereignty over us?

Is it not yet stranger, that you, who have defended the Revolution by comparing it to the Reformation, should yet declare that the Reformation cannot be justified without supposing that the church of England was under no authority of the church of Rome?

For, my lord, if the church of England had not been under the authority of the church of Rome, how could our opposing that church be compared to the resisting of king James? How could our separation from that church be a defence of our withdrawing our allegiance from king James, without supposing that

* *Sev. Tracts*, p. 332.

† *Ibid.* p. 366.

the church before that separation had as real and legal authority as that king had before the Revolution ?

Your words are these ; “ Why should that (*i. e.* resistance) be absolutely and entirely condemned, as a damnable sin, any more than church separation, by which we got rid of the tyranny of Rome ?” And again, “ all church reformation, is not church destruction ; Why therefore must all resistance be called rebellion * ?”

Now is it not very strange, my lord, that after this, you should assert that the church had no authority before the Reformation ; and that if it had any authority, then our separation from it cannot be justified ? Is not this very strange, after you had used it as an argument to justify the withdrawing of our allegiance from king James the second ?

For let us suppose with you, that there was no church authority at the time of the Reformation, and then see how excellent an argument you have found out in defence of the Revolution, which, upon this supposition, must proceed in this manner.

The church of England might separate from the church of Rome, who had no authority over her ; therefore the people of England might resist their legal king, who had a regal authority over them. Again, the clergy of England, who were no subjects of the church of Rome, might separate from that church ; therefore the people of England, who were subjects to king James the second, might withdraw their allegiance from him.

Thus absurd is your argument made, by supposing that the church had not as real and rightful an authority before the Reformation, as James the second had before the Revolution.

Further ; Let us suppose with your lordship, that “ if there was a real authority in the church at the time of the Reformation, then the Reformation has no bottom, but is altogether unjustifiable ;” let us suppose that this doctrine is true, and then see how consistently you have argued upon this supposition.

You say the Reformation cannot be justified ; it has no bottom to stand upon, if the church of Rome had a real authority ; yet this opposition, which is so entirely wrong, because an opposition to authority, is brought by you as a parallel case to prove that the resistance against the authority of king James was entirely right. This Reformation, which, if it was brought about

against any church authority, is said to be for that very reason, without any bottom, and to have no foundation, is used by your lordship to point out the true bottom and firm foundation of the Revolution.

And here let all the world judge whether reason and religion alone can induce any one to maintain the truth, the justice, the honour, the Christianity of the Revolution, as founded upon resistance to a legal king; and yet condemn at the same time the Reformation, as having neither reason, nor truth, nor justice to support it, as founded upon a departure from a real authority in the church of Rome. For reason and religion do as plainly give leave to depart from the highest authority in the church, when the laws of God cannot be observed without departing from it, as in any other case; and there is no more necessity of supposing or proving that there was no rightful authority in the church, to justify our departing from it, than it is necessary to prove such a person not to be my father, or to have no authority over me, in order to justify my disobeying his unlawful commands.

Again, your lordship is farther at a loss about the Reformation, which cannot possibly be justified, if afterwards an authority in matters of consciences and salvation, be still claimed.

Thus you say; "Nor can I ever understand, upon this bottom, (viz. the claiming such authority) what it was that could move or justify those, who broke off from the tyranny of the church of Rome; unless it be sufficient to say, that it was only that power might change hands*."

Here your lordship cannot conceive any thing more unjustifiable than the Reformation, if church authority is still to be kept up; nor can you upon this claim assign any other pretence for reforming, but only that power might change hands.

Did your lordship then never hear of the justice of removing one authority, and setting up another? Can you think of no case, where equity, honour, and duty called upon a people to resist one power, and yet make another to succeed?

Now if this practice can be equitable and honourable, and is asserted to be so by your lordship, can it be conceived that reason alone should induce you to load the Reformation with so much guilt and injustice, to condemn it as so groundless an undertaking; because though it set aside the tyrannical authority of the church

of Rome, yet it asserted a true church authority, and made obedience to it necessary to obtain the favour of God.

Suppose some friend to the Revolution, after hearing that the Prince of Orange was proclaimed king, and a regal authority set up, should then have said in your lordship's words, "I can never understand, upon this bottom, what it was that could move or justify those, who broke off from the tyranny of the late king James; unless it was sufficient to say, that it was only that power might change hands."

I appeal to your lordship, whether any thing could be more extravagant and senseless than such a declaration as this from a friend to the Revolution.

And I as freely appeal to the common sense of every one, whether your own declaration, expressed in the same words, with regard to the Reformation, sets you out to any better advantage in relation to that.

For it is full as good sense to say, where is the justice of the Revolution, or what foundation has it, in the reason of things, if there is still a king to be acknowledged, and a regal authority to be submitted to; as to call out for the justice, and equity, and reason of the Reformation, if there is still a church authority which we are obliged to obey. And it is as certainly the shame, and reproach, and injustice of the Revolution, that a government and regal authority is still maintained, as it is the shame, and reproach, and injustice of the Reformation, that a church authority is still asserted.

And there was no more necessity in the nature or reason of the thing, that the Reformation should disown all authority properly so called, in matters of religion, than that the Revolution should have rejected all authority, properly so called, in civil affairs. Neither does the Reformation any more contradict itself, or undermine its own foundation, and give the Papists an advantage over it, by claiming and asserting a church authority, than the Revolution contradicted itself, or conspired its own ruin, by setting up a king, and maintaining a government in the state. And it had been just as wise, as prudent, and politic management, if the Revolution had set up no government, but left every man to himself in civil affairs, in order to have prevented the return of the late king James; as if the Reformation had maintained no church authority, but left every person's religion to himself, in order to keep out Popery. And it is just as much matter of joy

and triumph to the Papists; to see this authority asserted in the church of England, as it was matter of joy to the late king James to find that a regal authority was set up against him.

But to go on; your argument, when put in form, will proceed in this manner.

The church of England departed from the authority of the church of Rome, therefore we may lawfully depart from any church authority. And again; at the Reformation we lawfully separated from the communion of the church of Rome, therefore we may as lawfully separate from any particular communion.

And now, my lord, can any argument be more trifling, or draw more absurd consequences after it, than this? And yet, absurd as it is, it is one of your best, and which you seem to take great delight in: thus are we told in almost every page, that if we will stand by the reason and justice of the Reformation, we must give up all authority in matters of religion; and not pretend to a necessity of being of any particular church, if we would justify our leaving the Romish church.

But pray, my lord, you have told us, that the people of England of all stations did lawfully and honourably, &c. resist the late king James; but does it therefore follow that they may as lawfully and honourably resist king George? If not, how does it follow that because we might justly separate from the church of Rome, therefore others may as justly separate from the church of England?

Is it inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution to declare men rebels, because it was founded (as you affirm) upon resistance? If not, why must it be inconsistent with the principles of the church of England, to declare any people schismatics, because she separated from the church of Rome? Now if you will say that all who take arms at any time against any king, are justified by those who took arms against the late king James; then you would have some pretence to make our separation from the church of Rome a justification of every other separation in the world. But since you cannot say this, but have pretended to demonstrate the contrary, that though sometimes resistance is not rebellion, yet sometimes resistance certainly is rebellion, you are particularly hard to the Reformation, to make it either unjustifiable in itself, or else to be a justification of every other pretended reformation.

But however, as hard as you are upon the Reformation in this place, making it, considered as a separation, a defence of all other separations from the church of England; yet you yourself, to shew your equal regard to both sides of a contradiction, have asserted the contrary, and declared that "as all resistance is not rebellion, so neither is all separation schism."

Now, I suppose, when you say that all resistance is not rebellion, it is certainly implied that some resistance may be rebellion; and likewise by declaring in the same manner all separation not to be schism, it must as necessarily be implied that some separation may be schism. Here therefore you plainly teach us that some separation may be schism, and some separation may not be schism; yet your present argument is founded upon the contrary supposition, that either all separations are lawful, or none are lawful; for it is the constant complaint in every chapter of your book, that the church of England should assert any necessity or obligation upon others of conforming to her, when she herself denied the necessity of her conforming to the church of Rome. So that the lawfulness or justice of her separation from Rome, is urged to shew the equal lawfulness and justice of all separations from the church of England; which argument is plainly founded upon this proposition, that all separations from any churches, are either equally lawful, or equally unlawful. Which is directly contrary to this other proposition, that some separation may be schism, and some separation may not be schism. Which contradiction is just as palpable, as if you had said, all resistance is not the sin of rebellion; yet all resistance is either equally lawful, or equally unlawful.

But to go on, you say that "all resistance is not rebellion," and for a proof of it, say, that "all church separation is not schism;" which plainly implies, that there is at least as much difference betwixt some separations from different churches, as there is betwixt some armed resistances against different kings. Now, if, according to your lordship, there is as much difference betwixt resistances, as there is betwixt an action that is a duty, and an action that is a sin; and you have proved this difference, by comparing these resistances to different sorts of separations, then it will necessarily follow that there may be, nay must be, as much difference betwixt one separation and another separation, as there is betwixt one action that is a duty, and another action that is a sin. This being the true state of the case, your lordship's ar-

gument in defence of the separatists taken from our separation from the church of Rome, will stand thus:

We separated from the church of Rome, because such separation was our duty, therefore the fanatics may separate from the church of England, though such separation is a sin: which is as rational an argument, as if it should be said, such a one killed a man lawfully, therefore any one else may kill a man unlawfully. For if some separation may be a duty, and some separation a sin, it is as false and ridiculous to infer, that if our separation is just, it justifies all other separations; as to conclude, that because we may do our duty, others may transgress their duty. For there being manifestly, and from your own acknowledgment, this great difference between one separation and another separation, that one separation in such circumstances, will no more justify a separation in other circumstances, than the lawfulness of killing a man in some cases, will prove it lawful to kill a man in all other cases.

Now if your lordship has any demonstrations ready, to shew that resistance in some circumstances is a Christian duty, and resistance in some other circumstances is a damnable sin; and that it may be as great a sin to resist some princes, as it is a duty to resist others; if you can help us to any plain rule, any certain signs to know an honest Christian resister, from a resister who is a rebel and in danger of damnation; I hope there may be found as plain rules to shew us who separates lawfully, and who separates unlawfully, from any particular church. If you can give any reasons why the late king James might be resisted then, and yet shew it a sin to resist king George now, it is something strange that you cannot find any reasons, why it was our duty to separate from the church of Rome then, and yet shew it is a sin to separate from the church of England now.

For I would suppose at least, that there is as much difference between separating from the church of England, and separating from the church of Rome, as there is betwixt resistance against a good king, and resistance against a tyrannical oppressor; and if there be this difference, then you must allow, that it is as false to argue from the lawfulness of separating from one church, to the lawfulness of separating from the other, as it would be to argue, that because oppressive tyrants may be resisted, therefore just and good kings may be resisted. I have been the longer in examining this doctrine in this particular view in relation to resistance, that it may be seen with how much truth you say, you have "recom-

mended such principles as serve to establish the interest of our common country and our common Christianity, of human society and true religion, upon one uniform, steady, and consistent foundation *."

For it is evident that these principles, if put in practice, directly tend to the utter ruin of our common country, and our common Christianity: for I have shewn that all the arguments which you have advanced against church authority, if they have any force, conclude with the same force against all sorts of authority in the world.

I shall now proceed to a most remarkable evasive denial of every thing you have said relating to church authority, from your own mouth.

A remarkable Evasion of your Lordship's, in relation to Church Authority.

THE learned Committee charged your lordship with "denying all authority to the church, and leaving it without any authority to judge, censure, or punish offenders in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation †." To support this charge, they quoted these words of your sermon; "Christ is sole Law-giver to his subjects, and himself sole Judge of their behaviour in the affairs of conscience and salvation; in these points he hath left behind him no visible human authority."

Now how is it that your lordship has cleared yourself from this charge? Why truly by declaring, that by a denial of all church authority, you only meant to deny to the governors of the church a power of passing the irreversible sentence, or, that Christ has left no visible authority here to judge people at the last day. When you talked so much of church authority in matters of religion, and of "an authority left behind," it was very reasonable to think that you was speaking of an authority which related to the church in this world. But it seems, all you have denied in relation to church authority, is only this, that any one but

* Preface to Com. Rights of Subjects.

† Repres. p. 4.

Christ shall pass the irreversible sentence, or judge us at the last day.

For you say; "As Christ is to pass the irreversible sentence, thus he is judge alone. And what I affirm of him, I deny of others in the same sense in which I affirm it of him: and in no other sense can I be supposed to deny it, because it answers no purpose*."

Therefore when you say no men have any authority in affairs of religion and conscience, you only say that no men have authority to pass the irreversible sentence at the last day. For you declare that thus it is that Christ alone is Judge, and you only deny that of others, which you affirm of him, and consequently the only authority which you deny them, is that of judging the world at the last day.

Strange! my lord, that after so many elaborate pages for ecclesiastical liberty, so many compliments received for your successful attacks upon church authority, that after all, you should declare that you have not so much as touched upon church authority, but have only been labouring to demonstrate that the judgment of the last day is committed to Christ alone.

"Christ," you say, "is in no other sense judge of the behaviour of Christians in these points, than as their condition must and will be determined by his sentence: And when I deny this of men, I do not, I cannot mean to deny this of them in any other sense but that in which I affirm it of Christ †."

So that when you in plain words seem to deny all authority in the church, as by saying that Christ alone is judge of the behaviour of Christians in matters of religion, and that he has left behind him no visible human authority in these points, and such like phrases, as seem to ordinary understandings to deny all rule and authority in the church, you only mean that no one but Christ is to pass the sentence at the last day. This is the key your lordship has given us to your writings, which indeed gives them quite another face, and makes them such a course of amusements as exceeds all which have yet been seen in that kind, as will appear from the following particulars.

Thus when you say, that in the affairs of conscience and salvation, Christ hath left no visible human authority behind him; the meaning is this, that Christ hath left nobody behind him in this

* Answer to Repr. p. 33.

† Ibid. p. 46.

world to pass the irreversible sentence in the next world, *i. e.* hath left no one to do that here, which cannot be done till hereafter. This is the sublimest sense which this passage is capable of, from your own construction.

Again; you say, the church of Christ is the number of persons who are sincerely and willingly subjects to him as their law-giver and judge*; which, according to this new key, is to be thus understood: the church of Christ is the number of persons who will sincerely and willingly submit to the sentence of Christ at the last day. For you say, we are to submit to him as our judge; and you expressly say, he is in no other sense judge of the behaviour of Christians, than as he is to pass the irreversible sentence; therefore if we are to be willingly and sincerely subject to him as judge, our obedience or subjection to him as judge, can be no otherwise expressed, than by our submission to his sentence then pronounced.

So that this definition comes at last to signify a number of persons who sincerely and willingly submit, some to be saved, and some to be damned at the last day; for this will be the effect of Christ's sentence as judge.

This is as sound divinity as if I should define the church of Christ to be a number of persons who sincerely and willingly submit, some to live, and some to die.

Again, you say, that your doctrines relating to the authority of the church, is the very foundation on which the church of England stands; and that they are so necessary for its continuance, that without them it is impossible to defend its cause against the Roman catholics.

Now your doctrine concerning church authority, you have over and over declared to be only this, that Christ alone shall judge the world at the last day. For you expressly say, that you deny the church an authority of judging in no other sense, than in the sense in which you affirm it of Christ.

Now, my lord, how comes this doctrine to be the support of the church of England? How can it possibly have any relation to the merits of the cause? Does it follow that the pope had no legal authority in England, that transubstantiation is false, that purgatory is a groundless fiction, and prayers to saints are unlawful, because Christ alone shall judge the world? This is what you have

affirmed of Christ, this is all which you have denied of men; and this doctrine it seems about church authority, as you are pleased to call it, is the only support of the church of England, and the very foundation on which it stands.

A Roman catholic tells me, that transubstantiation is true; I answer him no, that cannot be, and that for this reason, because no order of men shall judge us at the last day, Christ alone should do it. Could any thing be more extravagant, or more foreign to the purpose, than such an answer as this to a Roman catholic? And yet, according to your account of the matter, this is the only answer which can be defended. For you have denied no authority to the church, but that which peculiarly belongs to Christ as judge at the last day; and yet you say that your doctrine relating to church authority, is the very foundation and support of the reformation.

Now if this doctrine be our only defence against the church of Rome, and what alone supports us against that church, then the Presbyterians, the Independents, Quakers, and all sorts of fanatics, who own this doctrine, that Christ alone shall pass the last sentence, are by it as well defended against the church of England, as she is against the church of Rome; so that it makes us as much wrong in regard to the Dissenters, as it makes us right in regard to the Papists; and though it should give us victory over the Papists, yet it makes us fall a conquest to the fanatics. For it is certainly as proper for a Quaker to reply to the church of England that his reformation is justified against the authority of the church of England, because Christ alone shall judge the world at the last day, as for the church of England to make that answer to the church of Rome.

Your lordship says, for you to deny church authority in any other sense, answers no purpose. Pray, my lord, what purpose does this manner of denying answer? Here is a dispute about church authority, and the powers of ecclesiastical governors: your lordship interposes, and declares that no men shall pass the irreversible sentence at the last day. To what purpose, my lord, is this declaration? Does it strike any light into the controversy, or any way point out the merits of the cause? Does this inform us whether there is any such thing as church authority, or where it is seated? If two families were trying their title to the same estate, and the judge should pretend to determine the matter, by saying that God alone is sole proprietor of all things, it would be

as much to the purpose as to tell us in the controversy about church authority, that Christ alone shall judge the world. Does this any way prove that there is no human authority in the church, or that Christians are no way concerned with it? What an excellent argument is this? Christ alone shall judge the world, therefore no men have any authority in religion, therefore it can no way affect you with regard to the favour of God, whether you submit or not, to such human authority.

Whether your lordship is forced upon this method of explaining yourself, by any other motives than those of sincerity and conviction, is what I shall not presume to say; but I believe, if a person should be called to account for saying the king had no right to create peers, and should afterwards defend himself, by saying that he only meant he could not create in that sense in which God alone could create, I am apt to think such a defence would be no great recommendation of his sincerity. But, my lord, it would be as proper and as ingenuous for a person so accused to make such a defence, or rather such an escape, as for your lordship, after the most express repeated denials of all church authority, to declare that you only meant to exclude it from passing the irreversible sentence at the last day. And the nature of church authority is as much settled and determined by this declaration, as the king's power in his kingdom, as to the creation of peers, is declared by saying that God alone can create.

For is it any argument that no persons have any particular authority to baptize others; to admit to the holy sacrament, and exclude unworthy persons from it, because they are not to judge the world at the last day? Is it a proof that bishops have no authority to ordain, to confirm, no commission from God to take care of religious matters, and see that all things in the divine service be done decently and in order, because Christ alone is to pass judgment upon all at the last day? Does it follow that men are under no church authority, but may choose any government, or no government, as they please, because Christ alone shall call the world to judgment? There is as much logic in saying that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, therefore bishops have no more authority than laymen, as to say they have no authority in religious affairs, because Christ is to judge the world.

Yet you say this was the only proper sense in which you could be supposed to deny it. Now, my lord, I should have thought

it had been more to the purpose to have denied church authority in some such sense, as it had been falsely claimed by somebody or other, that it might have been said that you had an adversary somewhere or other. But in this matter you have not so much as an adversary in this world: for no one pretends to be judge as Christ is judge, or sets up the authority of the church in opposition to the last tribunal; yet this is the only manner of judging, the only sort of authority which you say you have denied to others; therefore you have only denied that which was never claimed; you have only denied that which no more relates to church authority, than it relates to church music. The pope himself neither pretends to pass sentence at the last day, nor that his judgments here will have any effect in the next world; but conditionally, that is, *clave non errante*. Now this is not a sense in which Christ alone is judge, therefore it is not a sense in which you have denied it to others. So that notwithstanding this long elaborate treatise against church tyranny and popish claims, popery itself is as safe and sound as ever it was. For you have denied this power of judging in no other sense, than as you have affirmed of Christ, as he is to pass the last irreversible sentence at the day of judgment; but the pope does not claim it in that sense, therefore the papal power is untouched by your lordship.

Here I must observe how your lordship has evaded the great points in dispute, both concerning the nature of the church, and church authority. When you was charged with describing the church contrary to Scripture, and the article in the church of England, your answer was, that you had only described the invisible church; which was saying in other words, that in a dispute amongst visible churches, and about church-communion, you described a church which had no relation to the matter, nor ever can have to any dispute amongst Christians. This, my lord, to speak tenderly of it, may be called only an evasion.

Again, as to church authority, your lordship has been charged with denying it all, and leaving it no right to judge or censure in the affairs of conscience. Your answer is this, that you have only denied that Christ has left any men here to judge us at the last day. That is, in a controversy about the existence of church authority, the extent and obligation of its laws, you have only denied such an authority as nobody claims, nor ever will be executed till all visible churches and disputes about them will be at an end, viz. the day of judgment.

This, my lord, is another evasion, and that in the very chief point in dispute, where sincerity should have obliged you to have been open, clear, and express. But no sooner are you touched upon this point, but you fly into the clouds, and the very Dissenters themselves lose sight of you.

Thus when you had plainly said, that Christ hath left behind him no visible human authority in the affairs of conscience, the Dissenters might justly think they had nothing to be charged with for their disobedience to bishops; they might well think that they were left to any government, or no government in religion, as they pleased, since Christ had left no visible human authority; but then how must they be astonished, my lord, to find that your assertion about church authority does not at all relate to the church in this world, but to the exercise of a certain authority in the next world, after all churches on the earth are at an end? To find that you have denied no authority to any men, but that which peculiarly belongs to Christ at the last day: that is, that you denied no authority which ever was claimed either by protestant or popish churches, or indeed which relates to the church in this world?

Suppose, when his majesty was last at Hanover, any one should have asserted, that the regency had no authority in civil matters; would the regency have thought it any excuse, if he had said that he only meant they were not the governors of Hanover? Yet, my lord, it would be as proper an apology for him who had denied the power of the regency in Great Britain, to say he only meant they had not the supreme power in Hanover, as for your lordship, after a denial of all visible church authority in this world, to say you only denied an authority to pass the irreversible sentence in the next world.

Thus has your lordship left the dispute, and only pretended to deny that which nobody ever claimed, viz. that any men have authority to judge the world in Christ's stead, or pass the irreversible sentence at the last day.

Your lordship is here apprehensive that you shall be charged with fighting without an adversary: and therefore you point out several, and say, "I meant it against those who are so very free in declaring others of Christ's subjects out of God's favour, and in obliging Almighty God to execute the sentences of men."

There has been indeed, my lord, a number of men ever since christianity appeared in the world, who had been very free in declaring

heretics and schismatics out of God's favour, and who have maintained that these heretics and schismatics, when censured by the church, cannot be received into God's favour, but by their submitting to, and returning to the church. But now, if your lordship means your doctrine against these, you are, still without an adversary, and might as well mean it against nobody; for these men never pretended to judge others in Christ's stead, or to erect an ecclesiastical authority in opposition to the great tribunal, which is the only authority you pretend to deny.

You go on: "If we had no such amongst protestants, yet it might be pardonable to guard our people against the presumptions of the Roman catholics, who assume to themselves that power of judgment which Christ alone can have."

Surely your lordship must have so great an aversion to popery, that you never could so much as look into their books; for otherwise I cannot conceive how you should not know that the Roman catholics pretend to no power of judging so as to affect people, but upon certain conditions, as *clave non errante*; but I suppose this is not a power of judging which belongs to our Saviour; *clave non errante* has no place in his judgments. How then can your lordship charge the papists with assuming his power, when that which they assume cannot be ascribed to him without blasphemy? So that, my lord, it is just as pardonable to guard your people against these presumptions, as it is to alarm them with false and imaginary dangers.

Again, you say: "But how lately is it that we have had people terrified with this very presumption, even by protestants; and the terms of church power, and the spiritual fatal effects of church censures made use of to frighten men into a separate communion?"

My lord, I shall not here enter into the merits of that controversy which your lordship here points at, it being the doctrine itself which your lordship blames, and not the misapplication of it. Thus you censure them, not because they would draw people from a true church to a false one, but because they pretend to frighten men out of one communion into another. This is your lordship's heavy charge against them, that they should presume to talk of the differences of communions, and prefer one communion to another. So that whoever thinks any way of worship to be dangerous, and endeavours to withdraw people from it, is here censured by your lordship, as pretending to judge in

Christ's stead, and setting up an authority, in opposition to the last day.

Your lordship saith, it is with this very presumption, (viz. that they can pass the irresistible sentence,) that these men have endeavoured to frighten people into a separate communion. If I should say that it is upon presumption that Christ never appeared in the world, that your lordship has delivered your late doctrines, I should freely submit to the charge of calumny; and I am sure your lordship has ventured as far in saying that it was with this very presumption that these men delivered such doctrines. And your lordship has as much reason to charge them with atheism, as with this very presumption; for they no more presume to judge in Christ's stead, or pass the irreversible sentence, than they presume there is no God.

Your lordship has still, it seems, another adversary, a late writer (the Dean of Chichester) who has spoken unwarily of the effects of the spiritual punishments the church inflicts, being generally suspended till the offender comes into the other world*.

This fine censure is very modest, carrying it no farther than an unwary expression; but presently the charge advances; and, you say, if it be thus, you confess you think the condition of Christians much worse than the condition in which St. Paul describes the Heathens, who are left to their own consciences, and the righteous judgment of God. So that at last it comes to this, that the Dean has taught such doctrine as makes it more desirable to be a Heathen than a Christian.

Let us therefore try how this charge is supported: the Dean has said, the effects of spiritual punishments are generally suspended till the offender comes into another world †; therefore, says your lordship, the condition of Christians is much worse than that of Heathens; and the reason is this, because Heathens are left to their own consciences, and the righteous judgment of God; so that if spiritual punishments signify any thing to offenders in the other world, or have any effect there, then such people are, in your lordship's judgment, not left to their own consciences, and the righteous judgment of God.

Pray, my lord, how does it follow that if spiritual punishments have any effect in the other world, that then offenders are not left to the righteous judgment of God?

* Answer to Repr. p. 35.

† Serm. p. 8.

Is it an argument that people are not left to the righteous judgment of God, because they are to be punished in the other world? Or is it an argument that they are excluded from God's righteous judgment, because they are not punished till they come thither? I should have thought it a plain argument for the direct contrary; and that one could not give a stronger proof that such offenders were left to the righteous judgment of God, than by saying that the effects of such punishments are not felt till the offender comes into the other world; I should have thought this a manifest declaration that the offender was to fall to the righteous judgment of God, since he was not to feel any punishment till he was fallen into God's hands. If the Dean had intended to teach that church punishments have no effect, but such as the righteous judgment of God gives them, how could he have better signified his intention, than by declaring that "the effects of such punishments are generally suspended till the offender comes into the other world?" How could the Dean more expressly guard against any horrible apprehensions of church censures, or more directly refer the cause to God, than he has here done? His words are a plain declaration, that such offenders must fall to the righteous judgment of God, since they are to fall into his hands before they feel the effects of such punishment.

If any discontented offender against the church should tell me, that if the censures of the church can signify any thing to him, he should be glad to be a Heathen, and have his fate amongst them; would it not be sufficient matter of satisfaction to tell him, that these punishments will have no effect but in the other world, where there can be no injustice; and that it is the same God who judges the Heathens, who will judge Christians?

Yet this declaration, which is the only ground for satisfaction to men of conscience, under the censures of the church, is by your lordship pretended to be such an evil as to make us rather resign our Christianity than submit to it. This is all which the Dean has said to make it more desirable to be a Heathen than a Christian.

Suppose, my lord, the matter had been worded stronger, and instead of saying that "the effects of spiritual punishments are generally suspended till the offenders come into the other world," it had been said, "the spiritual censures of the church shall rise in the judgment, and condemn offenders." If it had been thus expressed, what complaints might you not have made against such

unwary expressions? What cruelties and hardships might you not have charged on such doctrine? And how advantageously might you have compared the felicity of heathenism to such christianity?

But, my lord, that divine Person who has reserved to himself the righteous judgment of the world, has yet declared to a certain generation, that "the men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with them, and condemn them, because those repented at the preaching of Jonas, but these did not, though a greater than Jonas was with them*."

Now, my lord, here lies the same objection against this doctrine which there does against the Dean's. For is it not full as hard that the repentance of the men of Nineveh, or any where else, should have any effect upon the impenitent at the day of judgment, as that the censures of the church should have any effect upon offenders in the other world? Is it not as cruel that the impenitent shall have their guilt aggravated by other people's preaching, or repentance, as by other people's censures? And would it not be as proper here to say, if this be so, happy they who never heard of preaching or repentance, as to set forth the happiness of Heathens, because they are free from church censures? If the sentence of the church will rise in judgment, and condemn offenders, then you say such persons do not fall to the righteous judgment of God. But is not this as true of the men of Nineveh, that if they shall rise up in judgment, and condemn the impenitent, that then such persons are not left to the righteous judgment of God?

So that had you been one of our Saviour's hearers, you must have been as much astonished at his doctrine, as at the Dean's unwary expression, and have been obliged to say then, as you have said now, "that you have such notions of the goodness of God, and of his gracious designs in the Gospel, that you think it your duty to declare your judgment, that the supposition is greatly injurious to the honour of God, and of the Gospel, and the thing itself impossible to be conceived †."

Your lordship has here only advanced this argument against the significance of church censures, but any one else may as justly and to as much purpose urge it against every part of christianity.

Thus it may serve to prove that it would be better never to have had the Scriptures; for if any texts of Scripture shall rise in

* Matt. xii. 41.

† Answer to Repr. p. 36.

judgment, and condemn those who disbelieved them, or disregarded their doctrine, then it may be said, much happier are the Heathens, who have nothing of this to fear from any Scriptures, but are left to their own consciences, and the righteous judgment of God.

Again; as this argument proves even the Scriptures to be an unhappiness, so will it prove every advantage in human life to be a misery.

For it is certain that the examples of religious men, the good advice of our friends, and the virtuous commands of our parents and governors, will, if neglected, affect our condition; and though, like the spiritual corrections of the church, they may not be felt here, yet hereafter they will rise in judgment, and condemn us. May I not here say with your lordship, if the case be thus; if other people's wisdom, virtue, advice or commands can affect our state in the next world, then more happy are those who never saw a good or wise man in their lives, and who have nothing to fear from the advice or commands of any, but are left to their own consciences, and the righteous judgment of God.

So that you cannot condemn the Dean's doctrine, as horrible, without condemning it as an horrible thing that the men of Nineveh should rise in judgment, and condemn the impenitent Jews; or an horrible thing that the light of the Gospel, the blessings of christianity, and the advantages of education should have any effect in the next world upon those who despised them in this world.

*Of the Authority of the Church, as it relates to
Excommunication.*

IN order to vindicate this doctrine thoroughly, and shew upon what bottom it is founded, I shall, as briefly as I can, state the nature and intent of spiritual punishments, and shew what effects they have upon offenders in the other world; from whence, I persuade myself, it will farther appear that such effects do no more exclude persons from the righteous judgment of God, than the Heathens are excluded from his righteous judgment.

Now that corrupt members may be cut off from Christian communion, till by their amendment they recommend themselves to a re-admission, is plain from Scripture. This is even granted by your lordship, that "Christians may set a mark upon notorious offenders, even by refusing to them the peculiar tokens and marks of Christian communion, as well as by avoiding their company and conversation *." But then your lordship makes no more of it, than a right which all Christians have to avoid an open, wilful, and scandalous sinner †; so that this excommunication, considered as a church act, is only the same power in a body or society, of avoiding persons they abhor, which is the common privilege of every single person, whether in or out of the church, to shun those he dislikes.

And all the excommunication you allow, is this, that as private persons have a right to shun and avoid those they dislike, so the church may exclude such members as are disapproved of; and that this judging, or excommunicating, is a right equally invested in all Christians, and entirely without any effect upon the person excommunicated, so as to make his condition either better or worse before God.

I shall therefore, my lord, beg leave to shew that the power of excommunication is a judicial power, which belongs to particular persons, which they have a right to exercise from the authority of Christ; and that persons so excommunicated are not to be looked upon, as persons who are only to be abhorred and avoided by Christians, as any man may avoid those he dislikes, but as persons who are to be avoided by Christians, because they lie under the sentence of God, and are by his authority turned out of his kingdom.

That excommunication is a power which belongs only to particular persons, will appear from the nature of the thing itself, as it is an exclusion of persons from the Christian worship: for as only particular men can officiate in the Christian worship, and admit people into communion; so only those persons can refuse the sacrament, and exclude offenders from communion. Nothing can be more plain, than that those who can alone administer the sacrament, can alone exclude men from it.

All persons are admitted conditionally into the Christian covenant, and have only a title to the benefits of it, or the ordinary

means of grace, as they perform the conditions of their admission; and those same persons who have alone the authority to admit them into the church upon those conditions, have alone the authority to exclude them for non-performance. And their act of exclusion is as effectual towards the taking from them all the privileges of Christians, and as truly makes them aliens from the kingdom of God, as their act of admission at first entitled them to all the benefits of church-communion. For as they have as much authority to exclude some, as they have to admit others into the church, the authority being the same in both cases, it must be in both cases equally effectual.

If your lordship will say that all people are equally qualified to admit persons into the church, that, "Go ye, and baptise all nations," conferred the same powers on all Christians; then indeed it must be granted that excommunication, or exclusion from the church, is a right equally invested in all Christians. But as sure as Christ gave peculiar power to his Apostles, as sure as they left particular men to succeed them in their powers, so sure is it that only such successors can either admit or exclude persons from Christian communion.

Secondly; That excommunication belongs to particular persons, will appear from the institution of it in Scripture.

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more. And if he should neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven *."

Here, my lord, is as plain an institution of excommunication, as can well be conceived, and he who can doubt of it, may doubt whether baptism be instituted in Scripture.

First, we may observe that here is an authority, given to the church over the offender, and that such an authority, as neither belonged to private men, either separate or united together; for the offender here had first been admonished, by a single person, then by "one or two more," *i. e.* an indefinite number, but still here is nothing granted but admonition; but as soon as he is brought before the church, there is an authority appears, and the

* *Matth. xviii. 15.*

offender is to feel its sentence, "let him be unto thee as an
"heathen."

Secondly; That this authority did not belong to the church, considered only as a greater number of Christians, but as it signified particular persons who had this authority from Christ, for the edification of his church.

For Christ expressly declares in the following verse, that "where two or three are met together in his name, there is he
"in the midst of them."

Here is the description of that church before whom the offender was to be brought, and whose authority Christ promises to support; it is two or three met together in his name.

Now the church had not this authority over the offender, considered as a number, *i. e.* as two or three; for we see that the offender had been already before such a church; he had been before two or three; and after neglect of them, he was brought before another two or three, met together in Christ's name. Which is a plain proof that the offender was not censured by the church, as it signifies a number of Christians, but as it implies particular persons acting in the name of Christ, and with his authority.

Thirdly; We may observe that the authority here granted to the church is a judicial authority, such an authority as affects and alters the condition of the person excommunicated, implied in these words, "let him be unto thee as an heathen;" that is, as the bishop of Oxford observes, "in the most natural and common sense of the words, they should look upon him no longer as a member of the church, but place him among infidels*;" and again, "as reduced into the state of heathens †."

Now unless it can be said that a person who is turned out of the kingdom of God, and reduced into the state of heathens, is in the same condition which he was, when he was in the church, and had a right to all the benefits of communion; unless we can say that a person thus rejected from the means of grace, by the commission of Christ, is in the same condition with him, who is continued in the church by the same commission of Christ; it must be allowed that here is a judicial power granted to the church, and such as affects the condition of the offender in the sight of God.

* Church Gov. p. 354.

† Ibid. p. 356.

Fourthly; It is to be observed that this authority of the church is made judicial by the express promise of God to ratify and confirm it. For after it is said, "let him be unto thee as an heathen," it is declared that whatsoever they should thus bind on earth, should be bound in heaven.

From all this, it plainly appears, that excommunication is as truly a divine positive punishment, as baptism is a divine positive blessing; and that the one as certainly excludes us from the kingdom of God, as the other admits us into it. For since here is as plainly Christ's express authority to take from some men the ordinary means of grace, and exclude them from the common benefits of Christianity, as there is his authority to "go and baptise all nations;" I desire to know why one is not as truly a divine positive institution as the other? Is not Christ's authority as effectual and significant in excluding, as in admitting persons into his kingdom? Is not that same power as able to take away the privileges of church-membership, as it was at first to grant them?

If therefore there be any blessing or happiness in our being admitted into the church; there must be as much misery and punishment in our exclusion out of it. For as it implies the loss of all those privileges and favours we were made partakers of, by our admission into the church; so we must needs be punished in the same degree that we were happy.

If therefore baptism, a divine positive institution to admit us into the privileges of Christianity, makes any alteration in our condition, as to the favour of God, *i. e.* if we are brought any nearer to God by baptism, than we were before; then it plainly follows excommunication, a divine positive institution, which deprives us of all these privileges of Christianity, and, as the bishop of Oxford expresses it, "reduces offenders into the state of "heathens," must needs affect our condition with regard to the favour of God.

For if there be any thing in baptism which is just matter of joy, there is something equally terrible in excommunication; which, when rightly executed, as effectually makes us aliens from the promises of God, as baptism, when rightly administered, makes us children of God, and heirs of eternal life. So that he who can ridicule and expose the terrors and effects of excommunication, is acting just as Christian a part,

as he who fleers at and despises the benefits and advantages of baptism.

Seeing therefore the church hath as express an authority to turn some men out of the church, as it hath to admit others into it, it is as false an account of excommunication, to make it only that common right which every man has, to avoid those he dislikes; as if it should be said, that admission into the church by baptism, implies no more, than that common right which every man has to do offices for those he likes. Now, my lord, is baptism to be administered, because persons may do good offices for one another? Is there a power in the church to increase its members, by admitting others into communion, for this reason, because people have a common right to chuse their company? If not, my lord, how comes the exclusion of members to be nothing but a common right of avoiding those we dislike? Are not persons excluded from all the benefits of their admission? So that if there was any authority required for the admission of persons into the church, if this authority was only from God, it is certain that an exclusion from these church-privileges cannot be executed but by the same authority, which first granted them. For no person can be deprived of any privileges, but by that power which at first granted them.

When therefore your lordship recurs to the common right of persons to avoid, if they can, those they dislike, in order to state the nature of excommunication; it is just as much to the purpose, as if I should get a chymist to examine the natural qualities of water, in order to state the true efficacy of baptism: for men no more act by any powers of their own when they exclude offenders, than they baptise others into communion by their own authority, or than water unites them to Christ by its natural qualities.

Yet your lordship sets forth the nature of excommunication, and the right the church has to it, only from that "common right, which all Christians have of avoiding, if they can, those they dislike." Thus you say, the church may excommunicate, because "every person has a right to judge, nay he cannot help judging of the behaviour of men*;" that "every man will judge him to be a murderer, who takes away his neighbour's life unjustly."

This comes up as truly to the nature of excommunication, and is as just an account of it, as if any one should set forth the authority of a British judge, and shew the extent of his judicial power, by saying, he indeed may judge and condemn a murderer, for this is the right of every person to judge, "and no one can help judging and condemning a murderer." It is as consistent with sense thus to set out the power of the judge, as it is with reason and Scripture, to compare excommunication to that private power of judging and thinking which every one enjoys.

For, my lord, can it be supposed that when our Saviour tells them, that they should reject such a person out of the church, and look upon him as an heathen, and that he would bind, *i. e.* confirm their sentence; can it be supposed that he only meant they might think and judge a wicked person to be a wicked person, only in such a manner as every man cannot help thinking and judging? If our blessed Lord only here intended this, what occasion was there for his promise to ratify their judgment? What need is there of an assurance, that they shall privately judge, what they cannot help privately judging? Or indeed to what purpose is any promise at all made here, if nothing is to be effected? If this sentence be only a private, unauthorized declaration, like the opinion or judgment of private men, what room can there be for this ratification of our Saviour? If no effects are intended in the judgment of the church, what can be the meaning of this promise? Or rather, since our Saviour has here instituted the authority, and promised to ratify the exercise of it, how dares any Christian to compare it to a private personal power of judging, or declare that it is without any effect upon the condition of Christians? For, my lord, either something is here promised to the sentence of the church, or there is not; if there is something promised, then the sentence of the church is no more like the personal sentence of private men, than the power of the judge is like the power of a private man; if you will say there is nothing here promised in these words, "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," &c. then you must say that there is nothing at all meant in them; for it is impossible to shew that they can have any other meaning, than that of a promise; so that if no promise is made, they are certainly so many dead letters.

Again ; That this is a judicial power, is also evident from the case of the incestuous Corinthian. St. Paul says, " what have I " to do, to judge them also which are without?" Now the Apostle could not have put this question, if by judging here had been meant no authority, but a private power of judging and thinking a sinner to be a sinner. For a man can no more help judging a murderer to be a murderer, which is without the church, than if he were within the church. And it is as proper for us to judge and think aright of those who are out of the church, as of those who are within it. So that St. Paul could not mean, what have I to do to think a murderer to be a murderer which is without the church, it being every man's duty to think as truly of all things and persons as he can. Seeing therefore he plainly intimates that he had a power of judging in the church, which did not belong to him out of the church, it follows that this power was judicial and authoritative: for a private power of judging and thinking belongs to every man with regard to every thing.

We shall more easily understand what is meant by the effects of spiritual punishments, if we consider them under this division.

First, Such as are the primary and intended effects ; secondly, such as are only the accidental effects of them.

Now as to the primary and intended effects of spiritual punishments, they are these.

First, to preserve the honour of God and his church, that ill members being cut off, it might be " presented a glorious church, " not having spot or wrinkle; or any such thing ; but that it might " be holy, and without blemish *."

Secondly, To reform offenders, and reclaim them from their vices ; it is a discipline given to the church for the edification, and not the destruction of its members. Thus St. Paul says, the incestuous Corinthian was to be " delivered over to Satan, for the " destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day " of the Lord †."

Thirdly, To preserve the rest of the church from the ill influence of their example, and that by such punishments exercised upon others, they might fear and learn from thence not to offend.

* Ephes. iv. 25.

† 1 Cor. v. 5.

These are the intended effects of the punishments which the church inflicts, to preserve it a holy society, and save the souls of its members.

God Almighty has instituted several means for the advancement of virtue, and the salvation of mankind; and amongst others, he has set up this authority of the church to promote the same ends. It is his human, ordinary means for the preservation of his church; and therefore, as it can operate infallibly, or affect people with a divine certainty, it is only conditional, and is to prevail towards the salvation of mankind, as far as human and conditional means can prevail.

And indeed it is an institution which has a very natural tendency to produce the effects designed by it. For, considering Christianity as a covenant with God, wherein our title to happiness depends upon our use of the ordinary instituted means of grace, nothing can more naturally induce us to live worthy of such means, than this authority in the church to withdraw them upon our abuse, and expel us from the terms of the covenant. Men would not dare to transgress, when they saw they could neither break the laws, nor corrupt the faith of christianity, without being turned out of the church, by such a power as Christ hath set up for that purpose, and with his promise to make good its decrees. They must be very obstinate sinners who could be content to lie under a sentence which as effectually takes from them all pretensions to Christian happiness, as their baptism entitled them to those pretensions at first.

The chief reason why sinners are generally so little affected with the horror of their condition, is because they look upon their punishment at the future judgment, as a great distance off; and since they are within the church, and enjoy the ordinary means of grace, they think they can repent in time. But now Christ, by instituting this church authority, has suited his discipline to the weakness and frailty of our nature; and they who are only to be affected with things present, have a present judgment to fear; which, though it is only the judgment of men, yet is the judgment of such men as are commissioned to pronounce it in Christ's name, and with his promise to ratify and confirm it. So that they have as much reason to look upon themselves as effectually cast out by God in that sentence, as they were received into covenant with God by baptism; for there is the same divine authority to support them both.

As to those other effects of spiritual punishments in the other world, they are not the intended, but accidental effects of such punishments, which are brought upon offenders by their own wicked behaviour under them.

Thus the salvation of mankind is the primary intended effect of Christianity; yet it may have such effect upon some men by their own impiety in it, as to make it better for them if they had never heard of the name of Christ. For Christianity may become so much a punishment to some persons in the other world, that their condition may be less tolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. But then this is not the intended effect of Christianity, but an accidental effect which such persons bring upon themselves; who, by their own ill conduct, turn a mercy into a judgment, and makes that which was intended to save them, the accidental cause of their greater ruin.

Thus it is with spiritual punishments; they are the merciful corrections of God intended to prevent our future misery, but if disregarded, will certainly increase it. This will easily explain what is meant by the effects of spiritual punishments in the other world, or how they are suspended till the offender comes thither. It is not the direct intended effect of church punishments to encrease the misery of sinners, or damn them in the other world; no more than it is the direct intended effect of Christianity to encrease people's damnation: but as Christianity, if abused, will be the accidental cause of their greater damnation who so abuse it; so the censures of the church, when despised, will have this accidental effect, as to encrease the punishment of those who so despised them. This is the nature of those effects which spiritual punishments will have upon the impenitent in another world.

As for instance, a person who is turned out of the church, may all this while be lusty and strong, and flourish in all the advantages of this life; but when he comes into the other world, he may then find that the spiritual punishment was a sore evil, that it is ratified by Christ, has encreased his guilt, and will be matter of punishment for ever.

He will then find that the censure of the church has encreased his guilt in these respects:

First, As it was a judicial sentence pronounced by Christ's authority, and therefore not to be despised or neglected without great impiety; so that let the sinner have been what he will before,

when he continues in his sins in contempt of this tribunal set up in Christ's name, his guilt is thereby exceedingly increased.

Secondly, As it is the most powerful means, and the very utmost which God can do to reclaim, or even terrify sinners from their impiety, as it is the most awakening call to repentance, an institution only less terrible than the last judgment; those who are not affected with it, must be rendered more odious in the sight of God, and made ripe for a severer punishment.

These, my lord, are the effects of spiritual punishments in the other world; it is thus that they alter the condition of offenders in the sight of God in regard to his favour. They are certainly under greater displeasure, after they have despised the censures of church authority, and have resisted an institution, which is the last possible means to recover them.

In former times God has been pleased to send his prophets to forewarn sinners of their destruction, as Jonah to the men of Nineveh: but in the Christian dispensation, he governs us by his ordinary providence; and though he does not send express messengers to recal sinners, yet he has instituted a standing authority in his church, to censure offenders, and give them up to destruction in his name, unless they immediately repent. And what can we think more dreadful than a sentence thus pronounced against us by God's authority, and with his promise to confirm it?

Was there any thing more awakening or more dreadful in the preaching of Jonah, than in this declaration? Jonah could only preach and declare, he could execute nothing himself; it was his being sent in God's name, which created all the terror, and was the motive to repentance. Now, though the church can only censure and declare, yet since it is as truly commissioned to censure in God's name, as Jonah was sent in God's name, there is as much reason to dread the consequences of neglecting the church, as of not repenting at the message or preaching of any prophet from God.

I must now beg leave here, my lord, to lament an assertion from the hands of a Christian and Protestant bishop; where you declare, that the "excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian neither added to God's displeasure, nor would the want of it have at all diminished it. Neither if he had died in an impenitent condition, would that sentence have had any effect in the other world*."

* Answer to Repr. p. 38.

This, my lord, plainly supposes, that there is neither authority nor advantage in excommunication; for if there were it is certain that our abuse of it as an advantage, and our contempt of it as an authority, must needs increase our guilt, and consequently God's displeasure. Yet your lordship here teaches the world, that if the incestuous Corinthian, though justly censured, and that by an Apostle directing, and the whole congregation joining, had died impenitent, "that sentence would have had no effect in the other world."

Let us therefore suppose that some great patron of Christian liberty had gone to the disconsolate Corinthian, sorrowing under the sentence of the church, and should endeavour to quiet him after this manner:

"Why do you disquiet yourself with vain fears about the censure of the church, which neither hath nor can have any effect upon your condition as to the favour of God? Let the apostle and church be as solemn as they please in the denunciation; let them in the name of Christ deliver you over to Satan; yet take courage, and fear nothing from all this; for you may depend upon it, that, after all, you are but just where you was, before this sentence was passed. And if you die impenitent, you have no effects of this censure to fear in the other world."

Now this is the doctrine your lordship has taught for the consolation of those who are, or are likely to be under the sentence of the church; which, if it be now sound doctrine, it was as proper to be told the Corinthian then, as it is for your lordship to teach it now. And if your lordship had lived then, it would have been as proper to have told the Corinthian, as to tell us now; and you must have lain under the same Christian necessity of delivering him from vain fears, which now constrains you to set all at liberty from the like apprehensions.

St. Paul, speaking of the sentence passed upon the Corinthians, says, "Sufficient to such a man, was this punishment*." Now, my lord, if it have nothing of the nature of a punishment, if it has no effect where it is inflicted, if the person said to be punished can feel no effect from it, what strange language is this? Can that be called a punishment, or a sufficient punishment, which can in no degree be felt, which produces no effects, or makes no alteration in the person where it falls?

* 2 Cor. ii.

Again, St. Paul tells us, that he had amongst others which had corrupted the faith, "delivered Hymeneus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme*."

Now if this sentence can have no effect, if it cannot signify any thing to them, if they are just in the same condition after it, which they were before, why should it teach them not to blaspheme? Why should a sentence which they had nothing to fear from make them any longer afraid to continue in their errors? Here was therefore either a pious fraud made use of by the Apostle to frighten men from their heresies by something which was in itself vain and insignificant, or else your lordship has mightily mistaken the matter, in declaring that it is vain and insignificant. The Apostle plainly inflicts these censures, as a terror to offenders, and to frighten them from continuing in their evil courses; but if, as you say, persons be just in the same condition after this sentence in which they were before, if it has no effect upon them, though they are rightly censured, and yet die impenitent, which is what you expressly say of this Corinthian, then it is plain they are only pretended terrors, and that when the Apostles use them as such, they must be charged with using them as a pious fraud. And it must be owned that your lordship has very frankly made the discovery.

But whoever has piety enough to believe those first Ambassadors of Christ, will clear them from such a charge, and rather think it possible that you may mistake in your philosophy than they in their divinity.

To proceed: You declare, that though the "incestuous Corinthian had died in an impenitent condition, the sentence of the church would have had no effect in the other world:" by which you must mean, that it could not affect his condition there, so as to increase his punishment, and that because the "sentence did not add to God's displeasure, which he incurs solely upon account of his own behaviour, and not the sentence of men †." As thus, I suppose, your lordship means, that if an adulterer is censured by the church, he is under God's displeasure solely on account of his adultery, and not more so, on account of the sentence of the church; which cannot make him more an adulterer, or more guilty in the sight of God. It is for this reason that church censures are so insignificant, so void of all effect in the other world;

* 1 Tim. i. 19.

† Page 37.

because it is our sins alone, and not the sentence of men, which loses us the favour of God.

Let us therefore, my lord, suppose that God himself had delivered this sentence against the Corinthian which the church did, your lordship's doctrine would have procured him the same ease and quiet, and taught him to be no more concerned about it, than if it had been a mere church censure. For it is as true in your lordship's sense, that the sentence of God did not add to his displeasure against him, that he was not angry at him because of his sentence, but upon account of the offender's behaviour. But, my lord, will it therefore follow, that there is nothing to be dreaded in such a sentence? Will it follow, that if the person dies impenitent under it, that it will have no effect in the other world? Would your lordship go about, and preach liberty to persons under such a sentence, and assure them that the sentence itself could have no effect, that they were but just where they were before it was pronounced? Would you think it proper to deliver men from such apprehensions, and persuade them that they are in no danger from the sentence of God? And that because it is not his own sentence, but their behaviour which increases his displeasure?

This may perhaps appear a little too shocking to set up for an advocate for the laity against the sentence of God; but, my lord, if you was to do so, you would have the same argument to defend yourself against any effect in the divine sentence, which you now have against any effect in the sentence of the church. It would be then as much to the purpose to say, that God is not displeas'd with them, on the account of his own sentence, but purely for their own behaviour; as it is to tell offenders, that it is not the sentence of the church, but their behaviour which brings them under the divine displeasure.

I must here therefore, my lord, beg leave to call this a strict demonstration, that if the sentence of the church is not to be feared, if it hath no effect, because it is not the sentence, but our own behaviour which alone procures us the divine displeasure; if this be true, it is demonstration, that if God himself was to pronounce this church sentence, and turn offenders out of communion, that there would be nothing to be feared from it, that it could have no effect in the other world; for God's displeasure against them would not be occasioned by his own sentence, but by their behaviour. So that was the discipline of the church in God's own

hands, and were he with his own voice to threaten sinners, as the church now doth, your lordship would be as much obliged to comfort the laity against any apprehension of any effect from the sentence itself, as you are now to deliver them from the fear of man's judgment.

Again; if the sentence of the church is not to be dreaded, if it can have no effect in the other world, because we incur the divine displeasure solely on account of our own behaviour, then it is certain that the sentence of Christ himself at the last day can have no effect in the other world.

If therefore any unwary divine should endeavour to alarm his congregation with the effects of Christ's sentence at the last day, your lordship has taught any one to reject the doctrine, as greatly injurious to the honour of God; and that such doctrine was also impossible in itself to be conceived, he might presume strictly to demonstrate*.

A sentence which makes not a tittle of alteration in the condition of a man in the eyes of God, with regard to his favour or displeasure, cannot be said to have any effect in the other world †. But the sentence of Christ at the last day is of this sort.

Therefore the sentence of Christ makes not a tittle of alteration in the condition of a man in the eyes of God with regard to his favour or displeasure.

That the sentence of Christ makes no alteration in the condition of a man with regard to the favour or displeasure of God, is plain from hence; that men incur the divine displeasure solely on account of their own behaviour.

Thus, my lord, it is demonstratively certain, that as you have argued against the effects of the church's sentence in the other world, you have taught any one to argue against any effect in the sentence of Christ in the next world; and consequently it must be as unwary doctrine to frighten people with the effects of Christ's sentence, as to terrify them with the effects of the sentence of the church. And you have offered such an argument for the utter insignificancy of this sentence, as would make it equally insignificant, and void of all effect, though it was pronounced by God himself. So that as much as you often seem to expose it as the sentence of weak and fallible men, yet your argument does not reject it as a fallible sentence, but as it is a sentence from having

any effect. So that if it was pronounced by God himself, it must be as much without effect, and every sentence which ever can be pronounced by God, must be without any effect as to his favour or displeasure, because that is solely occasioned by our own behaviour. Therefore an infallible sentence can no more have any effect than a fallible one, because it is our behaviour alone which can affect us. This, my lord, will be of great use to some people, who will be glad to find that they have no more effects to fear from God's sentence either in this world or the next, than your lordship has from the church.

Again; if there be no effect in the sentence of the church in the other world, because our behaviour alone incurs the divine displeasure, then nothing which God inflicts upon us here can have any effect in the other world.

If therefore God's judgments were visibly fallen upon some town or country, and an unwary preacher should take occasion to excite them to a speedy repentance, from the sad effects such judgments would have in the other world, if they had not their designed effects in this, and declare that if they died impenitent under them in this world, they would feel worse effects of them in the other world.

A disciple of your lordship's might thus reprove the falseness and cruelty of such doctrine. "How can you terrify people with such vain fears about God's judgments? Is he provoked against us by his own thunder and lightning? Do his own judgments add any thing to his displeasure against us? Can any thing but our own sins and behaviour create his displeasure? Therefore we are certainly in the same condition as to that which we were in before his judgments fell upon us; and if we die impenitent under them, they can have no effect in the other world. False then, and greatly dishonourable to God is your doctrine, which supposes any thing can have any effect of that kind, but our own behaviour. To alarm us, therefore, with the effects of such judgments, is to put false fears into our minds, and teach us to dread things which are impossible; for it is impossible that any thing but our own behaviour should increase our punishment."

Now, my lord, is it cruel and unwary doctrine to awaken sinners under God's judgments to repentance, from a sense of the worse effects of those judgments in the other world, if they do not bring them to repentance in this? If it is not, I desire to know why it is not as reasonable to alarm people with the effects

of spiritual punishments, if disregarded, as with the effects of God's judgments, if they are neglected? What is there in the nature of the thing, why one punishment may have effect in the other world, and not the other? They are both equally God's punishments, intended for the same ends.

When persons are rightly turned out of the church, and denied the ordinary means of grace, they are as truly under God's special judgment, as a country which is oppressed with famine or pestilence; the one is his instituted, ordinary judgment to terrify men from iniquity; the other is his extraordinary judgment, his miraculous call to repentance. It is therefore as sound a Christian doctrine to say, that if persons die impenitent under God's extraordinary judgment, that such judgment will have no effect in the other world; as to say, that if the incestuous Corinthian had died impenitent under the just sentence of the church, *i. e.* God's ordinary judgment, that such sentence or judgment would have had no effect in the other world. And consequently to endeavour to terrify sinners with the effects of God's judgments in the other world, if they disregard them here, is as much condemned by your lordship as the Dean of Chichester's doctrine concerning the effects of spiritual punishments in the next world.

Lastly; our blessed Saviour told the Jews, that if he had not come, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin: which plainly implies that his coming into the world altered their condition as to the favour of God, because it made them more guilty in his sight than they were before he came. Yet your lordship's argument against the effects of church punishments directly denies this doctrine. For your objection against any effects in church punishments, is full as strong against any effects in Christ's coming into the world. And if people may be more guilty in the sight of God, after Christ is come, they may be more guilty after they have been censured by the church, for the reason is the same in both cases. For there can be no reason given why Christ's coming should affect their condition, with regard to the favour of God, but that he had a divine mission, and was an authoritative call to repentance; but this is equally true of excommunication, that it is a divine institution, an authoritative call to repentance; therefore they must either both be allowed to affect people's condition with regard to the favour of God, or neither; for the reason is exactly the same in both cases.

If therefore a learned pharisee, seeing a relenting publican touched with this declaration of our Saviour's, should have reproved him after this manner;

“ You need not be concerned at this person's coming into the world, for his coming does not increase God's displeasure against you, which can only be raised by your own behaviour; it is solely on account of that, that you can be out of God's favour. Sinners are out of God's favour, if this person had never come, and his coming does not add to God's displeasure against them; neither if they die in an impenitent condition after he is come, will his coming have any effect in the other world, where their condition will not be determined by his coming, but by their own behaviour.”

I should be glad, my lord, to know what you could have said against such a declaration, or how a person who would have told the incestuous Corinthian, that if he died impenitent under the censure of the church, that it would have no effect in the other world, could have any thing to object to the pharisee, who tells the publican if he died impenitent after Christ's coming, that his coming will have no effect in the other world.

The pharisee has exactly the same reason to tell the publican, that he was neither the more nor the less out of God's favour for Christ's coming, than you have to tell the Corinthian that he was neither the more nor the less out of God's favour for what was done by the church. For the censure here was right and infallible, and passed in the name and by the authority of Christ; it was passed by an Apostle, and you affirm, that Christ was in all that the Apostles did; therefore it may be truly said that Christ himself came to the Corinthian in this sentence; it was his authority and infallibility which censured him; and yet you say, that if he had died impenitent under this censure, he had been just where he was before, and it would have had no effect in the other world.

Pray therefore, my lord, let us know how any one can be more guilty for Christ's coming, or why it should have any effect in the other world upon those who die impenitent. A few reasons against this pharisee would be so many reasons against your lordship's doctrine. For Christ as truly comes to Christians in his institutions, as he came to the Jews in person; and it is as dangerous to disregard him in the one appearance, as in the other.

This account of excommunication will, I hope, be thought a sufficient answer to your lordship's strict demonstration, that it has no effects in the other world, nor adds any thing to God's displeasure. For from this it appears, that when you say, that "supposing no such punishment inflicted upon a wicked Christian, he is under the displeasure of almighty God to an equal degree, as he would be if it were inflicted*." It is as false as to say that a wicked Jew was under the same displeasure of God before Christ came, as he was afterwards; or that a person impenitent under an extraordinary judgment, is no more out of God's favour afterwards, than he was before, or if God had never visited him. It is as false as to say, that if God himself was to pronounce the sentence of the church, that persons under it would be just in the same degree of favour they were before, or that the sentence of Christ at the last day will have no effect.

The other part of your demonstration proceeds thus; excommunication has no effect, because, "supposing it wrongfully inflicted upon a Christian, he is still equally in the favour of God †."

The whole of this argument amounts to this, that a right censure of the church hath no effect, because a wrong one hath not. I should think any one in a mighty want of proof, who should say that the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian could have no effect, because the excommunication of some virtuous person will not have any effect; yet this is your lordship's demonstration, that it can signify nothing when it is right, because it signifies nothing when it is wrong.

Is it an argument, my lord, that when a bullet flies through a man's head, it has no effect upon him, because it will have no effect if it miss him? Is it a proof that motion cannot produce heat, because rest cannot produce heat?

If not, how comes it to be an argument that a right sentence hath no effect, because a wrong one hath not the same effect?

A right sentence is as opposite to a wrong one, as motion is to rest; and it is as good sense to say motion has no such effect, because rest has no such effect; as to say a right sentence has no effect, because a wrong one has not the same.

A right sentence is the only excommunication which Christ hath instituted, and to which alone this effect belongs; but it is

strange logic to infer, that this institution cannot have such an effect, because something which Christ hath not instituted, hath not the same effect.

A wrong sentence is as truly a breach and transgression of that excommunication which Christ hath instituted, as adultery is a breach of the seventh commandment; it is therefore as absurd to say that chastity hath not such an effect, because adultery hath not the same effect, as to affirm that a right sentence hath not such an effect, because a violation of that right sentence hath not the same effect. Your lordship's argument is this; that the sentence hath not such an effect in some circumstances, because it hath not the same effect in all circumstances: which resolves itself into this proposition, "that nothing can produce any particular effect, unless it produce the same effect in all circumstances."

Your lordship might as well have called it a demonstration against all effects in the world, as against the effects of spiritual censures; for there is nothing in the world, no powers either natural, moral, or political, which produce their effects but in some supposed right circumstances; yet this ecclesiastical power is demonstrated away by your lordship, because it does not produce the same effect in all circumstances.

Farther; if there is no effect in a right sentence of the church, because there is no effect in a wrong one, then it will follow that there is no effect in either of the sacraments when rightly received, because they want such effect in persons who do not rightly receive them. It may as often happen that the sacraments are administered in wrong circumstances, and as void of that effect for which they were intended, as any wrong sentence of the church be pronounced; but does it therefore follow, that there is no effect in the sacraments, that they are empty and useless to those who receive them rightly, because they are so to those who receive them otherwise? Your lordship must either affirm that the sacraments have no effect, or that the *opus operatum* is always effectual; for if you say they have effect, though not always, then it is certain that the sentence of the church may have effect, though not always. Whether your lordship will own the popish doctrine of the *opus operatum*, or deny the sacraments to be means of grace, that is, to have any effect, I cannot tell; but sure I am, if you do not hold one of these doctrines, you must own the sacraments to have conditional effects in supposed circumstances, which will sufficiently confute your own strict demonstration, that excom-

munication can have no effect, because it has not in all circumstances.

Again; I presume it may very justly be said, that the Christian revelation has some effect towards the salvation of mankind; but then it hath not this effect always, and in all cases, it is only effectual upon certain conditions. Now if excommunication can have no effect, because it is not effectual when it is wrongfully pronounced, then the Christian revelation can have no effect towards saving those who embrace it as they should, because it has no such effect on those who embrace it otherwise. The reason of the thing is the same in both cases, and any one may as justly set forth the vanity and insignificancy of the Christian revelation, because it does not save all its professors, as your lordship exposes the weakness and vanity of spiritual censures, because they do not absolutely, and in all cases, throw people out of God's favour.

I hope I have here said enough to vindicate the authority and effects of the spiritual punishments of the church against all your lordship has advanced against them.

I shall make an observation or two more upon this head, and then proceed to the other parts of your answer.

You say, "the incestuous Corinthian was never the more or the less in God's favour for what was done by the church*." This doctrine I have already confuted, and shall now only set this passage in another light. Let us suppose that you had said, "that no man is more in God's favour for being rightly baptized by the church." Now if a person is not more in God's favour after he is rightly baptized by the church than he was before, then it is certain that there is no need of baptism by the church; for any thing is sufficiently proved needless or useless in religion, if it neither procures nor loses the favour of God. This is undeniably certain, that if we are not more in the favour of God for being duly baptized by the church than if we were not baptized at all, that then that baptism is a useless trifle.

Now this is the doctrine which your lordship has taught; for he that says the incestuous Corinthian, though justly turned out of the church, was neither the more or the less in God's favour for what was done by the church, says likewise, that he who is duly baptized into covenant with God by the church, is never the more or the less in God's favour for being duly baptized by

* Answer to Repr. p. 43.

the church. For if it be a mere trifle, and altogether insignificant to us, as to the favour of God, to be turned out of the church by such an authority, it must be as mere a trifle to be admitted into the church by the same authority. So that he who declares the one, plainly declares the other: for this is evidently plain, that if nothing be lost as to the favour of God, by our being duly turned out of the church, that then nothing is got as to the favour of God, by our being duly admitted into the church.

For if our being in the church was any step towards God's favour, or rendered us more acceptable to him, those degrees of favour and acceptance must be certainly lost, by our losing that which was the cause of them.

He therefore who asserts it is a trifle to be turned out of the church, must also assert that it is as fruitless and trifling a thing to be admitted into the church. So that all your lordship's raillery and contempt thrown upon human excommunications, falls as directly upon human baptisms, and makes them as truly fruitless trifles without any advantage, as it makes excommunication a trifle without any punishment.

This therefore is the sum of your new religion, set up out of pure tenderness to the laity, to deliver them from the weight and burden of ordinances; this is to be their support against human excommunications, human benedictions, human baptisms, &c. that whether before or after baptism, whether before or after excommunication, they are still the same children of God.

Again, you say, "If it be supposed (as it sometimes is upon this subject) that a person behaves himself under the most undeserved censures with any degree of impatience, pride, or stubbornness, and that this displeaseth almighty God, it is plain that he incurs no part of that displeasure upon account of the sentence of men, but solely upon the account of his own behaviour; it being his own behaviour alone, and not the sentence of men, which has any such effect."

Here, my lord, your philosophy is upon the stretch; and rather than a Christian institution should have any force or effect, you have let it run such lengths, as to make even the ten commandments as mere trifles as the sentence of men.

As for instance; suppose a person should tell a friend that he had a great liking to some of his neighbour's goods, but that the eighth commandment made him afraid to take them from him; if his friend were but a master of your philosophy, he might

soon convince him of the folly of such a fear. He might tell him, that "if it be supposed (as it sometimes is supposed in this case) that by his manner of taking goods from his neighbour, that he displeaseth almighty God; it is plain that he incurs no part of that displeasure upon account of the commandment, but solely upon the account of his own behaviour; it being his own behaviour alone, and not the commandment, which has any such effect." He might also assure him that the commandment itself cannot hurt him, that he is not more or less in God's favour for what that commandment says, but purely for what he himself does.

I now, my lord, freely submit it to the judgment of common sense, whether your profound philosophy does not as truly make void and set aside the force and effect of the commandment, as the effect of excommunication.

For it is plainly as reasonable to tell a thief that the eighth commandment cannot hurt him; that if he steals, it is not the commandment, but his own behaviour alone, which will have any effect; as to declare that an impenitent offender is neither more or less in the favour of God for what is done by the church; because even supposing God to be angry at him for his behaviour towards the sentence of the church, yet it is not the sentence, but his own behaviour, which causes the divine displeasure; therefore the sentence, says your lordship, is a trifle without effect. And therefore may it also be said that the eighth commandment is a trifle without effect; for it is as true of the commandment in this sense, and your lordship is as much obliged to say that it is our behaviour against the commandment, and not the commandment itself, which will raise God's displeasure; as to say it is our behaviour under the sentence, and not the sentence itself, which brings God's displeasure upon us; so that it is undeniably plain, that if for this reason the sentence of the church be a trifle without any effect, that for the same reason the commandment must be equally a trifle, and equally without any effect.

And now, my lord, need we not heed the commandments, because it is not the commandments themselves which will have any effect upon us? Why then are we to be exhorted, and preached up into a contempt of the sentence of the church, because it is not the sentence itself will have any effect upon us? Is it safe to sin against the authority of the commandment, because it is not the commandment itself which can punish us? If not, where

is the sense; or reason, or christianity of telling us, that we need not heed the sentence of the church, because the sentence itself cannot punish us?

Suppose some high churchman had writ a treatise against stealing, and had carried the matter so far, as to talk of the fatal effect which the eighth commandment would have upon offenders, when it should rise up in judgment, and condemn them.

Would your lordship think yourself obliged, in regard to the liberty of those who want other people's goods, to tell them that indeed they ought to take care to act with sincerity in their acquiring the temporal things of this life; that they ought to consider with the utmost impartiality the nature of property, and the conditions of that original contract which first settled the rights and bounds of it, and gave every man a right in such or such a part of the things of this life; but that if they should through impatience of want, or pride, or any other passion or prejudice, make too free with their neighbour's property, and so displease almighty God, would you think yourself obliged to tell them, that the fatal effects of the eighth commandment, and its pretended rising up in judgment hereafter, is all sham and banter; and that however God may be displeased with them, yet that commandment will have no effect upon them? Would your love of liberty, your concern for the laity, engage you to give so much comfort, and preach such smooth things to such a class of people?

Thus much may be fairly affirmed, that you might as well deliver such a sort of people from their fear of the commandment, as endeavour to persuade impenitent offenders not to fear the sentence of the church. For as the guilt of stealing is aggravated by being contracted against the authority of the eighth commandment, so the guilt of impenitence is heightened by a continuance in it against that authority in the church, which is as truly founded by God to prevent the growth of sin, as the eighth commandment was given by God to prevent stealing. So that he who teaches offenders to disregard this sentence, which is authorized by God to awaken and terrify them into repentance, does the same as if he should teach thieves to disregard the eighth commandment, which was given by God to affright people from stealing.

If it should be here objected, that there is a very great difference betwixt the duty we owe to the eighth commandment, and our duty to the sentence of the church; because the command-

ment is always right and the same, whereas the church may err in its sentence:

To this it may be answered, that granting all this, that the church may sometimes err in its sentence; yet if it is ever in the right, if it ever can be a fault, or dangerous for sinners not to submit to, and be corrected by it, this will condemn your doctrine, which sets it out constantly, and in all circumstances, as a dream and trifle, and without any effect.

Secondly; here is no room left for you to plead the uncertainty of the church's sentence in regard to the certainty of the commandment, because you directly set forth your doctrine in a case (that of the incestuous Corinthian) where all was right and just, and yet declare that in that case it was without any effects; and that if the incestuous Corinthian had continued impenitent under it, and disregarded it as long as he had lived, it had signified no more to him than if it had never been pronounced. And in this case, my lord, and upon this supposition, that the authority judges and condemns such sinners as it ought to do, it is as abominable to tell such that they have nothing to fear from the judgment of the church, as to tell a thief that he has nothing to fear from the eighth commandment. And I here challenge all the reason which ever appeared against the doctrines of christianity, to shew me why it is not as agreeable to the Scripture to declare, that if a thief lives and dies in his sins of stealing, that he has nothing to fear from the eighth commandment; as to declare that an impenitent offender, though justly censured by the authority of the church, has nothing to fear from such a censure, though he lives and dies in the contempt of it.

Thirdly and lastly; though the church may sometimes err in its authority, and the commandment is always right; yet your doctrine makes it as reasonable to declare the commandment without any effect, as to declare the sentence of the church to be without any effect. For you do not say that excommunication is a trifle without any effect, because it is a sentence which may sometimes be wrong; but because, though we should displease God under the sentence of the church, yet that displeasure would not have been occasioned by the sentence, but by our behaviour alone. And this doctrine plainly makes all the commandments as mere trifles, and void of all effect, as it makes the sentence of the church so. For it is as true in your sense, and you are as much obliged to say, that if we sin against the commandments,

and incur the displeasure of God, that it is not the commandments, but our behaviour alone which causes it : and so the commandments of God have no more to do with the favour of God, but are as mere dreams without any effect, as the human excommunications you have so much exposed. This, my lord, is a very compendious confutation both of the Law and the Gospel ; and is a good reason why so many of those who have no regard for either, but think zeal in religion a meanness of spirit, are yet great zealots for your lordship's opinions.

Of Church Authority, as it relates to external Communion.

YOUR lordship says, "I know of no church authority to oblige Christians to external communion, nor any thing to determine them but their own consciences*." But to shew your desire to be informed, your lordship frequently calls upon the learned committee to declare what the authority of the church is. It is something strange that you should have been so long writing down the authority of the church, and yet not know what is meant by church authority ; that you should take so much pains to oppose (as you say) only absolute authority, and yet not know whether there be any else, or what authority you have left in the church. It is yet something stranger that a bishop of the church should be frightening the laity from a kind of church authority which is not claimed over them, and yet be at the same time pretendedly ignorant of what sort of church authority they are under. Here you have been preaching against that which they are not concerned with ; but when you should tell them what kind of authority they are concerned with, you have not one word of instruction ; but call upon the committee to declare whether there be any such thing as church authority which is not absolute. My lord, if there be not, to what purpose have you so often taken refuge in the word absolute ? Or where is the honesty or reason of saying you have not denied all authority, but only that which is absolute,

* Answer to Repr. p. 112.

if you believe there is no authority but what is absolute? If therefore your lordship has made this distinction with any degree of sincerity; if you intended any thing more by it than an artful playing with words, it plainly lies at your door to shew what authority you have not touched; and that in opposing that which is absolute, you neither have, nor intended to oppose all authority and jurisdiction in matters of religion. But instead of this, if the learned committee should explain to your lordship what that authority is which is not absolute, you only venture so far as to say, "that if there is any such authority, you are, for ought that you have said, at liberty to declare for it*." Mighty cautiously expressed, my lord! Had a courtier, who rather intends to amuse than inform, and talk artfully than sincerely, delivered himself in such inconclusive terms, it had not been much matter either of wonder or complaint. But for a bishop, who makes sincerity to be of more worth than all the Christian religion; for this bishop, in a cause which he declares himself ready to die in; in such a cause as is of the last consequence to us all, as men, Christians, and Protestants; for this bishop to say, if there be such an authority, instead of declaring whether there is or not; and to say, "he is at liberty to declare for it," instead of plainly saying whether he ought or not; however consistent it may be with sincerity, I am sure it has too much the appearance of the contrary.

For seeing you are charged with denying all authority in the church, if you consulted plainness and sincerity, if you regarded the information of the vulgar, and the peace of the church, which way could these considerations lead you to defend yourself; but either to shew that there was a real authority in the church, which you had not opposed; or else plainly to own that you had denied all authority, because all authority of every kind is to be denied? But instead of declaring yourself openly and plainly for the sake of truth, peace, and sincerity, you take refuge in words, and secure yourself behind a cloud of properly and absolutely, to the disturbance of honest minds, and to the satisfaction of the prophane.

Since your lordship calls out so often to be told what that authority is which obliges us to external communion, I shall beg leave to offer these following considerations upon this head, and

* Answer to Repr. p. 25.

hope they will sufficiently both assert and explain that church authority or obligation which we are all under to join in external communion.

Your lordship says, "I know of no church authority to oblige any Christians to external communion; nor any thing to determine them, but their own consciences*." I shall therefore beg leave to observe to your lordship what authority there is to oblige all Christians to external communion; and to shew, that they are no more left at liberty in this matter, than they are at liberty to steal or murder.

I suppose it is not proper or true, to say, that you know of no authority to oblige any Christians, or any thing to keep them from the practice of stealing, but their own consciences, because there is the express authority of God against this practice. Now if it would be improper and false to say this, because the authority of God has so plainly appeared in it; I shall easily prove, that it is as false and improper to say, that we have "nothing but our consciences to determine us" in the case of external communion, since the authority of God is as express in obliging us to this external communion, as in requiring us to be just and honest in all our dealings.

I desire no more to be granted me here, than that it is necessary to be a Christian, and that we are called upon by the authority of God to embrace this religion as necessary to salvation. This, my lord, is the express doctrine of the Scriptures; so that I hope I may presume upon it, as granted by your lordship, that there is an authority to oblige people to be Christians, and that this authority makes it as necessary, that they should be Christians, as it is necessary to obey God, and to conform to his will.

First, If Christianity be a method of life necessary to salvation, then are we necessarily obliged to external communion; for we can no other way appear to be Christians either to ourselves or others; but by this external communion. A person who lives in a cloyster, may as well be taken for a field general, as he who is not in external communion, for a Christian. For the Christian religion is a method of worship distinct from all others, in those offices and duties which constitute external communion; so that if you are so far obliged to be a Christian, as to serve God differently from other people, you are obliged to external com-

munion, because that service which distinguishes the Christian worshipper from all other people, is such a service as cannot be performed but in an external communion in such and such offices, viz. professions of faith, joint prayers, and the observance of the sacraments. External communion is only another word for the profession of Christianity, because the several duties and obligations which concern any one as a Christian, and distinguish him from other people, are duties which as necessarily imply external communion, as walking implies motion. Therefore to ask whether a Christian be obliged to external communion, is to ask whether a person who is obliged to walk, be obliged to move.

The short is this: no man can be a Christian, but by taking upon him the profession of Christianity; the profession of Christianity is nothing else but external communion with Christians; therefore it is as necessary to be in external communion, as to be a Christian.

I hope I need not prove to your lordship, that there is an authority to oblige people to the profession of Christianity; intending here only to prove, that the same authority obliges us to external communion.

Had your lordship therefore declared to the world, that you know of no authority to oblige people to be Christians, it had been as innocent and true a declaration as this you have made concerning external communion; there being plainly the same authority obliging us to the one, as to the other. For, my lord, what is implied in external communion, but our communicating with our fellow Christians in those acts of worship and divine service which Christianity requires of us? And what marks or tokens can we shew of our Christianity, but that we are of the number of those who are baptized into Christ's church for the joint worship of God in that particular service which the Christian religion has taught us? So that if we prove ourselves Christians, we must prove ourselves in this external communion, because to be a Christian implies no more, than the being of the number of those who visibly unite and join in such acts and offices of divine worship as are proper to Christians. If therefore there be no authority to oblige us to external communion, then no one is obliged to be a Christian.

Secondly, If there be no authority to oblige, or any thing to determine Christians to external communion but their own consciences, then it is plain, it is as lawful for all Christians to be

their own priests, and confine themselves to a private worship separate from every Christian in the world, as to join in external communion. For where there is no authority or obligation to determine our practice, there the thing must needs be indifferent; and to do it or let it alone, must be equally lawful. If there was no authority which obliged us to be baptized, it would not only be lawful to let it alone, but idle to trouble our heads about it. The same is true of this external communion; if we are under no law concerning it, it is no part of our duty either to do it, or let it alone.

It cannot here be said, that though we are not obliged to external communion with this or that church, yet we ought to join with some particular persons, and not worship God constantly by ourselves, and perform no offices with other people. For if we are obliged to communicate with any one person in the world, we are to hold communion with the whole church of Christ. For we are not obliged to communicate with this or that particular person on account of any civil or natural relation, but as we are Christians, and from the common nature of our Christianity. Since therefore our obligation to communicate with any particular persons does not arise from any private particular relation, but from the common nature of our religion; this does equally oblige us to hold communion with all Christians, as with any particular Christians, they being all equally related to us as Christians; and consequently it is as necessary to hold communion with the external visible church, as with any particular Christian. From this also it is plain, that it is as lawful to avoid communion with every particular Christian in the world, as to refuse communion with any sound part of the church on earth.

I beg of your lordship to produce but one argument why any two or three should meet together for the service of God, which will not equally prove it necessary that Christians should join in external communion. May it all be laid aside, my lord? Need there be no more of this assembling ourselves together for the performing of duties, which we thought we could not perform separately?

I have shewn in my second letter, that your lordship cannot, consistently with your principles, urge any reasons to any Dissenters to come over to the church of England; and here, my lord, it will appear, that you have not one argument against the absenters from all public worship. For it would be as odd and un-

reasonable in your lordship to offer any argument to such an absenter, why he should join in some public worship, after you have denied any authority which obliges us to external communion, as it would be for an Atheist who had denied the necessity of any religion, to persuade a man to be a sincere Mahometan.

If your lordship should tell this absenter from all communions, that he ought to join with some community or other in the worship of God; might he not fairly ask your lordship, how you came to tell the world, that you "know of no authority to oblige any Christians, or any thing to determine them to external communion?" Can any one be obliged to join in divine service, who is not obliged to external communion? Could any one imagine, that if he was not obliged to join in external communion, that it was not lawful to stay at home? Could he think, that when your lordship was declaring against any obligation to church communion, that you meant he ought to join himself with some of the Dissenters? Had your lordship plainly declared, that no Christian need read any book in the world, could you, consistently with yourself, offer any arguments why he should read the Bible? Yet this is as consistent as to desire any person to communicate with any body of Christians, after you have plainly disowned any obligation to external communion.

For whatever arguments your lordship can offer to an absenter from all public worship, may be answered in this manner. "Either your arguments for my joining with any Christians, are invented by yourself, and of your own making; or they are not; if they are fictions of your lordship's, and destitute of any foundation in the will or authority of God, then they are vain and to no purpose; but that all such arguments are mere fictions and inventions of your own, is plain from your lordship's express declaration, that you "knew of no authority, or any thing to oblige or determine Christians to external communion," so that all the arguments you can offer for my external communion are declared by yourself to be such as are of no authority, or have any thing in them to determine me to external communion."

And indeed had your lordship first declared, that there was no such thing as figure in bodies, and then pretended to prove that the world is round, it would be no more miraculous, than first to give out, that no Christians are obliged to external communion, and afterwards take upon you to persuade any one to join himself

to some body of Christians. Here therefore your lordship has so preached up and advanced this kingdom of Christ, that consistently with yourself, you cannot so much as require any one to be a visible member of it, or offer the least shadow of an argument why an absenter should rather go to some church, than trust to his own religion at home. Your lordship writ a treatise some years ago, on the "Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England." But pray, my lord, where is the reasonableness of conforming, if we are under no obligation to conform? Where is the reasonableness of doing that, which is not our duty to do? Where can be the reasonableness of going two or three miles to church for the sake of external communion, if there be "no authority, or any thing to determine us to external communion?" Can it be reasonable to spend our time, and some part of our wealth, in making up such meetings, as God has not required at our hands?

Your lordship must therefore either retract what you have said, and allow that there is an authority to oblige us to external communion, or acknowledge that no Christians are under any obligations to serve God in any communion, but may confine themselves to a private religion, separate from every other Christian in the world. That is, that no one is obliged to worship God in the public assembly, or join with any one else in the service of God.

Thirdly; If there be no authority to oblige us to external communion, then it may well be questioned how your lordship can answer for your joining in external communion in the church of England. Your lordship knows, that the communion of the church of England gives great offence to the Papist and Protestant Dissenters of all kinds; how then can your lordship justify your doing that which you need not do, which gives so much scandal to so many tender consciences?

Will your lordship be of a church, though it is this very church communion that is so very offensive? Your lordship knows that the animosities and church divisions amongst Christians is one of the most sore evils under the sun; that all the party heats and controversies is concerning whom we are to communicate with, and in defence of particular external communions. Now, my lord, what should that Christian do who is all sincerity, who believes there is no obligation to external communion, and who sees that the pretended necessity of it, causes all the difference and

division amongst Christians? Can that sincere person who believes and knows all this, keep at the head of a particular communion? Can he support so unnecessary, so needless an evil? Can that sincere person be a bishop in that communion, which stands distinguished from other external communions, chiefly as it is episcopal communion, when he allows there is no necessity of being in communion either with bishops or any body else? Could that pope be reckoned sincere who should declare that he knew of no authority, or any thing to determine him to exercise the papal powers? Could he be a sincere Christian, if he yet continued to exercise them to the scandal and offence of so many Christian countries? If he could, so might your lordship for continuing at the head of an external communion, which divides and disturbs Christians, though you know of no authority to oblige, or any thing to determine you to this external communion.

Surely your lordship will have more compassion at last for your dissenting brethren, more concern for the peace of Christ's kingdom, than to keep up such unnecessary communions, and disturb so many weak consciences by joining externally in the church of England, when you know of no authority or any thing to oblige you to join with any body.

Suppose the peace of Great-Britain was miserably destroyed by party rage and dispute about the stars. Would your lordship head one party of star-gazers against another? Would you join yourself to such a vain and useless cause at the expence of the public peace? Now, my lord, if there be nothing to oblige us to external communion, it is all a trifle, and mere star-gazing; and a person who appears in the cause and at the head of this external communion, can be no more a friend to Christianity, by keeping up such an unnecessary cause of division, than he could be a good subject, who should join in the needless idle quarrels of star-gazing party-men. In a word, if your lordship knows of any thing that obliges you to continue in the church of England, you ought not to have said that you "know of no authority to oblige, or any thing to determine any Christian to external communion:" but if you know of nothing that obliges you to continue in the church of England, then you ought rather to leave it, than to bear a part in so needless a community, and which gives so much offence to all those who dislike the terms of it.

Fourthly, If there be no authority to oblige us to external communion, how comes there to be such a sin as schism? How

comes the schismatic, or divider of communions, to be so frequently in the Scriptures ranked amongst the most guilty offenders?

Can it be a sin to be divided, unless we are under some obligation to be united?

It has been always granted, that schism is the separation of ourselves from such a communion of Christians as we ought to have held communion with. Now if separate worship from any Christians in the world be the sin of schism, then there must be some law that obliges those schismatics to join with those Christians, from whom they separate, and consequently there is an authority which obliges Christians to external communion.

Your lordship must either shew that schism does not consist in refusing to communicate with some Christians, or that though it be the damnable sin of schism to refuse communion with some Christians, yet there is no authority to oblige us to external communion with any Christians; *i. e.* that though schism be a sin, yet it is the transgression of no law.

The Apostle says, "Mark those who cause divisions contrary to the traditions which ye have learned of me, and avoid them." My lord, what strange language is this, if there is nothing to oblige us to external communion? If there is no obligation to be united, why must they be marked who cause divisions? If there be no authority that requires external communion at our hands, why must those persons be avoided who prevent external communion?

Either the Apostle or your lordship must be mightily mistaken; the Apostle tells us that divisions in the church are contrary to the doctrine which he had taught, and therefore there is the express authority of the Apostle to oblige us to external communion. But your lordship says there is no authority to oblige us to this duty, therefore you must either maintain that the Apostle taught no such doctrine, though he said he had, or that there is no authority in his doctrine to oblige us.

I suppose, my lord, that the Apostle by divisions here means external visible divisions, because he bids them mark those who cause them, and avoid them; for invisible internal divisions can no more be marked, or invisible schismatics avoided, than we can mark people's thoughts, or lock out a spirit. If therefore the division here spoken of be external division, then the sin here condemned is breach of external communion, and consequently we

are here required by the Apostle to join in external communion; unless we can suppose that the Apostle could condemn those who were externally divided, without meaning that they ought to be externally united.

Fifthly; If there be no authority to oblige us to external communion, then there is no authority to oblige us to be baptized. For baptism is an external visible ordinance of God, which as plainly implies external communion with others, as any contract in the world implies correspondence with others. And any person might as well be obliged to bargain and merchandize with others, without being obliged to be concerned with others, as be obliged to be baptized, without being obliged to external communion.

For as we cannot baptize ourselves, this shews that the Christian religion is not suited to the state of single independent persons, but requires our external communion to the performance of its obligations. And as we cannot be baptized by others, but by resigning up ourselves to the observance of new laws, this plainly proves that the person is baptized into a state of society and external communion. That baptism does not leave the baptized person to a separate independent worship, is very plain from the following instances.

The church of England, in the office for baptism, thus expresses herself: "We receive this person into the congregation of Christ's flock," &c. Again, "Seeing now—this person is regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church, &c." I should think it very plain, my lord, to every reader, that these passages shew that baptism necessarily implies external communion, and puts it out of the power of every baptized person to refuse external communion, unless he will break through the conditions of his baptism. For can we be "received into the congregation of Christ's flock," without being obliged to keep up this congregation, or to perform any duties or offices considered as a congregation or flock? Can we, in any sense, be considered as a congregation, or a flock, but in our communion in those offices which shew us to be Christ's flock? Can we be said to be "grafted into the body of Christ's church," if we are at liberty never to meet as a church, or act as a church?

The Apostle says, for "by one spirit we are all baptized into one body*." What can more manifestly denote external com-

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

munion, than this account of baptism? Can we be baptized into one body, and not be obliged to act as a body? Can we act as a body, by running away from one another, and refusing to unite in that service, into which we are baptized? I suppose we are here to be considered as a Christian body; but how a number of people can be a Christian body, who are not united in Christian worship, is hard to conceive.

When therefore you declare that you know of no authority to oblige Christians to external communion, you desert the doctrines of Christ, as plainly as if you said, that you know of no authority which obliges people to be baptized.

Sixthly, If there be no authority to oblige, nor any thing to determine us to external communion, then there is no authority to oblige, or any thing to determine us to communicate in the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. For if there is any law which obliges us to join externally in the observance of this institution, then it is out of all doubt, that we are obliged to external communion. Now if you will say that there is no law of God as to this matter, then the thing itself must needs be indifferent, and private mass must be allowed to be as right and lawful, as a joint communion in the holy sacrament. Either therefore you must defend private mass, or shew some authority against it; if you can produce any authority against it, then you produce an authority for external communion, and contradict your other declaration, where you give out that you do not know of any thing to determine us to external communion.

From all this it plainly appears what kind of authority that is, which obliges us to external communion; it is that same authority which obliges us to be baptized, to receive the communion, to profess the same faith, to worship God in the public assemblies, and to avoid the sin of schism; or, in a word, that same authority which obliges us to be Christians.

For all the offices of Christian worship and devotion which constitute external communion, are every one expressly required by God; and therefore external communion, which consists only of these offices, is equally required by God.

And this authority may be very justly called church authority, because it arises from the very nature of the church, because it is the institution of the church, from whence this obligation to communion ariseth. For Christ has instituted this church in order to oblige mankind to enter into it for the salvation of their souls:

as the church therefore is instituted for this end, the existence of the church lays an obligation upon all who have any opportunity of entering into it; and this obligation will last as long as the church of Christ shall last. The short is this; God has instituted an order or society of people, for the particular manner of serving and worshipping him; this society is not a voluntary one, which we may be members of, or not, as we please; but it carries in its very nature and institution an authority obliging us all, as we hope for happiness, to be members of it; we are obliged to be of the church, because Christ has instituted the church; therefore it is the institution of the church, which lays us under an obligation of entering into it; and this, and no other, is that church authority which obliges all people to external communion.

Farther; This may be very properly called church authority, because it was in the church, or that order of men, which Christ had instituted, before the Scriptures were written.

When there was only this order of men, before the writings of the New Testament were in being, there was then this authority arising from that instituted order of men, which obliged others to enter into communion with them; therefore this authority which began with the existence of the church, and flowed from the very nature of the church, may very justly be called church authority.

If it should be asked whether this authority be absolute; I answer, it is just as absolute as that authority which obliges us to be baptized. Our Saviour has told us, that "if we are not baptized, we shall be damned:" here therefore is an authority for baptism; the Scripture has not said whether this be so absolutely obliging, that there is no room in any case for a dispensation; therefore it is no case which concerns us. Now the authority which obliges us to external communion, is just upon the same terms; the thing is as plainly required as baptism; but whether in any cases it will be dispensed with, is what we have nothing to do with. If there be any sincerity, any weakness, any ignorance, or the want of any thing which will excuse those who refuse to be baptized, those same considerations may excuse the refusal of external communion with the church.

This, my lord, is the nature of that church authority, which obliges to external communion; it is that very same authority which obliges us to the profession of Christianity, or to enter into

covenant with God. For he who is in external communion with the church of Christ, is of the church of Christ, or in covenant with God; and he who is not in external communion, is not of the church of Christ, nor in covenant with God; and consequently it is that same authority which obliges us to be Christians, or in covenant with God, which obliges us to external communion.

So that when you say, you "know of no church authority to oblige, or any thing to determine people to external communion," it is directly saying that you know of no church authority to oblige, or any thing to determine them to the profession of Christianity, or to enter into covenant with God.

If your lordship should here say, that you only meant, you know of no human authority to oblige people to external communion, &c.

To this it may be answered, that you might as well have meant nothing at all by it, as have meant this. For,

First, suppose the question had been, whether there be any authority, or what authority it is, which obliges people to be baptized; and that in order to settle this point, you had here declared, that "you know of no church authority to oblige, or any thing to determine them to be baptized, but their own consciences;"

Could it be thought, my lord, after this, that you had not denied all authority for baptism? Could it be supposed, that by this declaration, you only meant to deny, that the authority which obliges us to be baptized, is human or civil authority? Could any one who only meant thus much express himself in this manner?

Yet thus it is that you have expressed yourself in the dispute concerning our obligations to external communion, you know of no church authority to oblige, or any thing to determine people to it; which makes it equally absurd to suppose, that you only deny that our obligation to external communion arises from any human or civil authority.

Secondly; If you only meant to deny an human or civil authority in this matter, how came you not to say so? How came you not to tell us what divine or Scripture authority there is to oblige us? Is it not as proper and as necessary in a dispute about this authority, to declare the true and right authority, as to protest against the wrong authority? But indeed nothing can be more trifling

than to say, that you have only denied any human or civil authority in this matter.

For, my lord, who ever imagined that our obligations to profess Christianity, that is, to be members of Christ's church, could proceed from any human authority? Human authority may and ought to encourage us in the practice of our Christian duties; but that our obligation to serve God as Christians, that is, in the external communion of the church, should arise from any human authority, can be supposed by none, but those who imagine Christianity to be a creature of the state.

Thirdly, You not only say that you "know of no church authority to oblige," but also add these words, "nor any thing to determine people to external communion, but their own consciences."

Now, my lord, if you only meant to deny a human authority in this matter; if you intended to own a divine authority to oblige us to external communion? how come you to express yourself thus contrary to your meaning; For if you believe there is a Scripture or divine authority which obliges us to external communion, surely this authority is something, and has some right to determine us to external communion; yet you expressly say that you do not know of any thing to determine Christians to external communion.

If it was asked whether Christians are obliged to pray for their enemies, and you should answer, I do not know any thing to determine them to pray for their enemies; would it not be nonsense and contradiction after this declaration, to suppose that you acknowledge that the Scriptures require Christians to pray for their enemies?

But to suppose that you acknowledge a divine or Scripture authority which obliges to external communion, after you have expressly declared that you do not know of any thing to determine us to external communion, is equally contradictory.

Lastly; you say you do not know of any thing to determine Christians to external communion, but their own consciences:

Now this farther shews that you deny all divine as well as human authority to determine us to external communion. For if there was a divine law which required this practice, we are no more left solely to our own consciences in this practice, than if it was determined by an express human law. For,

Can it be said that the Jews had nothing but their own consciences to determine them to abstain from blood? Can it be said that Christians have nothing but their own consciences to determine them to receive the holy sacrament? If this cannot be said because there is a divine law in both these cases, then it is as false and absurd to say, that there is nothing but our own consciences to determine us to external communion, if there be a divine authority which requires this practice. And consequently you have plainly denied all divine or scripture authority for external communion, when you say that you do not know of any thing to determine people to external communion, but their own consciences. The short is this; if you will say that you own a divine and scripture authority which obliges us to external communion, and if you will allow this authority to be something, then your contradiction in this matter is as palpable and gross as ever appeared in any writings; for you have expressly said, that you do not know of any thing to determine us to external communion: but if you own a scripture authority that obliges us to external communion, then your contradiction proceeds thus, that you do know of something, but you do not know of any thing to determine us to external communion. If you will not assert both parts of this contradiction, then you must stand to that which you have asserted, viz. that you do not know of any thing to determine us to external communion, which I have already shewn is the same thing as declaring you know of no authority, or any thing to determine people to profess christianity, or enter into covenant with God. But to proceed,

If you should say that you do not deny an authority that obliges us to external communion in general, but only an authority that can oblige us to any particular external communion:

To this I answer, that this is a groundless, false distinction; for our obligation to external communion with the church of Christ in general, and our obligation to external communion with this or that particular church, is exactly one and the same obligation.

For we are not obliged to join with this or that particular church for any private, particular reasons, but because we are obliged to be Christians, or of the church of Christ. And as no sound part of Christ's church is more his church than another sound part, so if we separate from any sound part, we are as truly

out of Christ's church as if we had separated from every part. And we can give no reasons for separating from such a part, but such as will equally justify our separating from every part of Christ's church; and consequently there can be no reasons offered why we should be Christians, or of the church of Christ, but will equally oblige us to enter into that particular part of Christ's church which offers itself to us. For the whole intent of entering into this or that particular church, is only to be a Christian, or of the church of Christ, and therefore it must be one and the same authority which obliges us to be Christians, that obliges us also to be of any particular church.

There is a Scripture authority which obliges us to forgive our enemies: now it would be as proper to say, that though there is an authority which obliges us to forgive our enemies in general, yet that authority does not oblige us to forgive our particular enemies, as to say, that though we are obliged to be of the church of Christ in general, yet we are not obliged to be of this or that particular part of Christ's church.

For the church of Christ in general as truly consists of these particular parts, as our enemies in general consist of our particular enemies.

So that as it is one and the same authority which obliges us to forgive our enemies that obliges us to forgive our particular enemies, so it is one and the same authority that obliges us to be Christians, that obliges us also to communicate with that particular sound part of Christ's church where we live.

There is therefore no room for this distinction, to suppose, that though we may be obliged to be of Christ's church, yet we are not obliged to be of this or that particular sound part of Christ's church; it being fully as absurd as to suppose that we may be obliged to be Christians, and yet not be obliged to be Christians.

When therefore you declare, that you know of no church authority to oblige, or any thing to determine us to external communion, it will be to no purpose to say, that you do not mean communion with the church of Christ in general, but only with any particular part of Christ's church; for I have shewn, that this distinction is false, and fully as absurd, as to imagine that we may be obliged to obey Christ's commands in general, but not be obliged to obey his particular commands.

From what has been said upon this subject, these following propositions are plainly true:

First; that as our entering into any particular part of the church, implies our entering into the church of Christ, or in other words, our embracing Christianity, it evidently follows, that the same authority which requires us to embrace Christianity, requires us also to enter into that sound part of Christ's church where we live.

Secondly; that this authority does not arise from any human laws, or the power which any men in what station soever have over others, but is the authority of God, who has instituted this church, in order to oblige all mankind to enter into it.

Thirdly; that this authority from God may be very properly called church authority, because God manifested this authority to the world by the institution of the church, because it began with the church, and flowed from its very nature; mankind being therefore obliged to enter into this church, because there was such a church instituted by God.

Fourthly; that this account does not in the least make it either unjust or improper, in our spiritual or temporal governors, to make laws for our conformity to this or that part of Christ's church; for though the authority which makes it necessary that we should enter into such a part of Christ's church is from God, yet this no more excludes our governors from requiring the same thing by their laws, than they are excluded from requiring us to observe any moral duties, because the same moral duties are made necessary by the authority of God. And as our violation of any moral duties that are commanded, both by divine and human laws, receives an higher aggravation, so the guilt of opposing any sound part of Christ's church is enhanced by our breaking through the laws both of God and man.

Fifthly; from this account of the authority which obliges us to external communion, it will be very easy to discover the weakness and fallacy of several of your lordship's arguments upon this matter.

Thus when you say, "It is evident that there is no choice of judgment left to Christians, where there is a superior authority to oblige them;—that in Italy, or Spain, or France, they are as much obliged by the church authority in Italy, Spain, or France, as Christians in England are obliged to a particular external communion in England, by any human authority as such in England*."

* Answer to Repr. p. 115.

Now, my lord, what could you have thought of less to the purpose, than these words thus put together? For does any one say, that our obligation to be of the church of England arises from any human authority, as such, in England? No, my lord, if human authority should not only desert the church, but make the severest laws against it, yet we should be still under the same necessity of communicating with it; because that necessity is independent of human laws, is founded upon the authority of God, and constantly obliges in the same degree, let the laws of the state be what they will.

Granting therefore, my lord, that the human authority, as such, in France or Spain, obliges the people of those kingdoms to conform to those churches as truly as the laws of England oblige the people of England to conform to the church of England, what follows? Does it follow that therefore the people of France or Spain are as truly obliged to communion with the church in those kingdoms, as the people of England are obliged to communion with the church in England? No, this will by no means follow; for since we should hold the same necessity of joining with the episcopal church in England, though all the human laws in England should forbid us, since we allow only an accidental and conditional authority in human laws, as they establish any particular religion, it follows that in France and Spain, &c. they ought to pay the same regard to human laws, and no more continue in their church because it is established, than we ought to leave our church though it was persecuted. The short is this:

The church authority which obliges us to external communion with any particular part of Christ's church, is that same divine authority which calls upon us to be baptized, and enter into covenant with God.

Now if human laws, whether of church or state, strike in with this authority, then they oblige us, as they do in other cases, where they require us to do that which the laws of God required before; but if human laws, whether of church or state, require us to enter into such a communion as hath not the authority of Christ for it, or forbid our joining with such a communion as is a true part of Christ's church, such laws are no more to be observed, than if they had established idolatry, or forbid the worship of the true God. For human laws are not supposed to make it our duty to enter into such a communion, but are applied as proper means to induce us to do that which the laws of God had

made it our duty to do before. And it is undeniably true, that though there should be ever so many human laws to command us to enter into any particular communion, that we must not comply with such laws, unless it be in regard to such a communion as it was our duty to enter into, though no such human laws were in being.

So that human laws create no necessity of external communion, any more than they create the necessity of praying to God; but they may be applied as very proper means to induce people to perform the duty of external communion, and to perform the duty of prayer to God.

The question therefore in any country is not this, whether the laws either of their church or state require us to enter into such a communion, but whether it be such a communion as it would be our duty to enter into, were there no human laws to enjoin it, whether it be a part of Christ's church, which we are obliged to enter into on pain of everlasting damnation.

When therefore you say, if the people of England are obliged by an human authority, as such, to enter into the church of England, then the people of France, Spain, and Italy, are as truly obliged by the human authority there to enter into those particular communions; you say exceedingly true, but to no more purpose than if you had made the following declaration.

If the people of England are obliged to enter into communion with the church of England by any military authority, as such, then the people of France, Spain, and Italy, are obliged to communion with the churches in Spain, France, and Italy, by the military authority, as such, in Spain, France, and Italy.

This, my lord, is as much to the purpose as what you have said; for our obligation to enter into a particular part of Christ's church, is no more founded in any human laws, as such, than in any military authority, as such; but is founded in the will of God, who has instituted the church on earth, and made our salvation depend upon our entrance into it. This is the authority which obliges, this is the necessity which lies upon us, to enter into any part of Christ's church.

If therefore you would shew, that in Spain, or France, &c. they are under the same necessity of being of the church in those kingdoms, which the people of England are of being members of the episcopal church in England; you ought to shew that the established church in Spain, or in France, is as truly a sound

part of the church of Christ, as the established church in England is a sound part of the church of Christ; and that the way of worship there, is as certainly that necessary method of salvation which Christ has instituted, as the way of worship in the church of England is that necessary method of salvation which Christ has instituted.

For this is the only authority or necessity which obliges us to enter into any church in any part of the world; namely, a necessity of being Christians, by entering into that church which Christ has instituted; so that if this same church be in Spain, and France, and England, then there is an equal necessity of being of the church in each kingdom; but if the church in Spain be not the church which Christ has instituted, and the church in England be that church which Christ has instituted, then there is as great a necessity of refusing to communicate with the church in Spain, as of joining in communion with the church of England.

This therefore being the nature of the authority or necessity which obliges to external communion, nothing can be more trifling, than to argue from the necessity of complying with the church in one kingdom, to a necessity of complying with the church in all other kingdoms; unless you could demonstrate, that because the established church in one kingdom is the true church of Christ, therefore the established church in every other kingdom is the true church of Christ,

Yet your lordship has spent a great many pages in declaiming against any authority or necessity which can oblige people to communicate with the church of England; because then there would be the same necessity that the people of Spain, and France, and Italy, should communicate with the church in those kingdoms. But I hope the most ordinary reader will be able to tell your lordship, that there is no more good sense, much less divinity, in this way of instructing the world, than if you had said, there is no necessity that the people of England should believe things which are true, because then the people of Spain will be under the same necessity of believing things which are false; and again, that there is no necessity that in this kingdom we should comply with good laws, because in other kingdoms people will be under the same necessity of complying with wicked laws.

But to conclude this point; I have here stated the nature of that authority or necessity which obliges us to external commu.

nion, that it does not arise from the laws of any men, whether in church or state, but from the will and authority of Christ, who has instituted such external communion, as a necessary method of salvation.

I have shewn also, that human laws, though they, as such, do not create a necessity of external communion, yet they have a very proper significance, and are as useful in this matter, as in any other parts of our duty.

Of Sincerity, and private Judgment.

IF you should here say, that by denying the necessity of external communion to arise from human laws, as such, I have resolved the choice of a particular communion into private judgment :

To this I answer,

First ; that by entering into any particular communion, we are to understand the same thing as entering into the church of Christ; or embracing the religion which Christ has instituted.

Secondly ; that when Christ came into the world, people were left to their choice whether they would embrace Christianity.

Thirdly ; that Christianity is still upon the same terms with mankind, and it is still left to every one's private judgment whether he will comply with the terms of salvation.

Fourthly ; that this does not destroy the force and obligations of authority, or make it without any effect upon the condition of men. For it does by no means follow, that there is no authority, or that there are no effects to be feared from such authority, because men may disown it if they please. For to say there is nothing in authority, that it is insignificant, and without any effect upon the condition of men, if they may use their private judgments, is as ridiculous as to say there is nothing in the happiness of heaven, or torments of hell ; that they can have no effect upon the condition of men, because men may judge of these things as they please.

Fifthly ; there is a choice of judgment left to us in every part of our duty ;

Whether we will believe a God,

Whether we will worship him,
Whether we will believe in Jesus Christ,
Whether we will acknowledge a world to come,
Whether we will believe there is such a place as hell.

And now, my lord, is there no authority for these things, because we are not forced to believe them against our judgments? Have those who refused to believe in Christ nothing to fear from his authority, because he appealed to their reason, and left them to determine for themselves? Is there no authority for the torments of hell, or nothing to be feared from that authority by those who deny there is any such place?

Now if there can be an authority in these matters, though the use of private judgment is allowed in these same matters, if this authority will condemn those who acted contrary to it, then it is certain that there may be an authority or necessity which obliges us to be of such a particular religion, though the exercise of our private judgment is allowed in the choice of our religion; and that we may have as much to fear from acting contrary to such authority, though by following our own opinions, as they have who act contrary to the will of God in any other respect, though by following their own opinions.

So that an authority or necessity which obliges us to be of this or that particular communion, that is, particular religion, is as consistent with the exercise of private judgment, as the necessity of believing a God, and worshipping him, is consistent with the exercise of our private judgment.

And if you will say, there is an end of all authority, if men may chuse one communion before another, you must also say, that if men might consider whether they should follow Christ, then there was an end of all authority in Christ over them.

And again; if men may reason and consider whether there be a God, or Providence, then there is an end of all necessity of believing either a God, or Providence.

If they may consider whether the Scriptures are the word of God, or any particular doctrines be contained in Scripture, then there is an end of all necessity of believing the Scriptures to be the word of God, or of believing any particular doctrines to be contained in Scripture.

If they may consider and examine whether any particular religion comes from God, then there is an end of all necessity of receiving any particular religion from God.

All this reasoning is full as just as to conclude that there is an end of all authority to oblige people to any particular communion, if they may consider the excellency of one communion above another, which is what you over and over declare.

Now, my lord, let us suppose that the question was, whether it be necessary to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God: would it not become every honest man not only to assert this necessity, but to shew wherein it is founded, and explain to every one that authority which calls upon us to receive the Scriptures as the word of God, and which will rise up in judgment against us, if neglected.

And what might we not justly think of him, who, instead of shewing the authority or necessity which obliges us to receive the Scriptures as the word of God, should deliver himself in this manner?

“ You are reasoning whether there be any authority or necessity, which obliges you to receive the Scriptures as the word of God. Whereas your very reasoning upon this matter, shews there is no necessity or authority to which you are obliged to submit. For since you are allowed to reason and enquire whether this be necessary, it is certain there is an end of all authority or necessity to oblige you to receive the Scriptures as the word of God; and if you do but sincerely follow your own private persuasions, you are entitled to the same degrees of God's favour, whether you receive the Scriptures as his word or not.”

Now, my lord, thus it is that you have instructed the world in relation to the authority which obliges us to external communion.

The question is, whether there be any authority which obliges us to any particular external communion.

Now, my lord, what has any one to do in this dispute, but to shew whether Christ has instituted external communion, or not? For on this alone must the necessity of it depend. And if it appears that external communion be instituted by our Saviour as a method of salvation, then it will follow that we are under a necessity, as we hope for salvation, of being in that particular method or manner of external communion, which Christ has instituted; so that unless it can be shewn that all pretended Christian communions are as truly that method, or particular communion which Christ has instituted, as any other communion is, it must

be as necessary to be in some one particular communion, as it is necessary to obey Christ; and as dangerous to join in some other communions, as it is dangerous to despise his authority.

But now your lordship, instead of considering what external communion is instituted, and what necessity arises from such institution, or where we may find such external communion amongst the many pretended Christian communions, has wholly passed over this point, and determined the question, by telling us, that since we are allowed the use of our reason in the choice of religion, it matters not what authority we oppose either of God or man; and that there can be no necessity of our being of any particular communion, but where our private judgment sincerely directs us.

Thus you say; "If the excellency of one communion above another may be regarded, then there is an end of all human authority to oblige us to one particular external communion*." And to shew that you can as easily destroy all divine authority or necessity of any particular communion, or religion, you tell us, that "our title to God's favour cannot depend upon our actual being or continuing in any particular method, but upon our real sincerity †." So that here the sincerity of private judgment as effectually destroys all divine authority and necessity of any particular communion or religion, as it destroys that which is human; and we are rendered as happy and as high in the favour of God for breaking his laws, as if we had observed them.

For here it is proved that there is no necessity of any particular communion or religion, not because there is none instituted by God, but because, whether instituted or not, our sincere persuasion will equally justify us, whether it complies with or opposes such institution.

But to proceed,

I shall now shew how this doctrine of yours of sincerity exposes all the terms of salvation, as delivered in Scripture.

In the Scripture we find that baptism is made a term of salvation; but if sincerity without baptism be as certain a title to the favour of God as sincerity with baptism, then it is plain, that not to be baptized is as much a condition or term of salvation, as baptism is a term of salvation. For if baptism with sincerity was more a term or condition of God's favour than no baptism

* Answer to Repr. p. 115.

† Preserv. p. 90.

with sincerity, then it is certain that it is not sincerity alone that procures the favour of God; and it is as certain, that if sincerity alone procures us the favour of God, then baptism is no more a term of salvation, than the refusal of baptism is a term of salvation. So that this doctrine makes baptism and the refusal of baptism either equally terms, or equally no terms of salvation; equally advantageous, or equally insignificant.

When therefore our blessed Saviour says, that 'except we are baptized we cannot enter into the kingdom of God *,' and he that is not baptized shall be damned: according to this doctrine of yours, we may also say just the contrary, that except we refuse baptism, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and he that is baptized shall be damned.

This, my lord, is very shocking; but I shall easily shew that these assertions are as proper and as just as the contrary assertions, if your doctrine of sincerity be right.

For, since your doctrine puts the sincere acceptance and the sincere refusal of baptism upon the same foot as to the favour of God, there can be no more danger in sincerely refusing baptism, than in sincerely accepting of baptism. Now if there is no more danger in the one practice than in the other, it must be plain to the most ordinary understanding, that it is as just and proper to declare one practice dangerous as the other; that is, it must be as proper to say, he that is baptized shall be damned, as to say, he that is not baptized shall be damned.

Now I know your lordship cannot, upon these principles, shew, that it is more dangerous to refuse baptism sincerely, than to receive baptism sincerely; and so long as this is granted, you must allow that it is as just to fix danger upon baptism itself, as upon the want of baptism. And consequently all your reasonings upon this subject are one continued censure upon our blessed Saviour's doctrine in relation to baptism, which according to your notions, is only as just and proper as the quite contrary would have been.

Again, our Saviour tells us, that "except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we have no life in us †."

Here we see the eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of man, is an instituted term of salvation, and insisted upon by our Saviour; but if, your doctrine be true, we may as well declare the contrary to be a term of salvation, and say, "except

* John iii. 3.

† John vi.

we sincerely refuse to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man, we have no life in us."

For, my lord, if sincerity in refusing to eat this flesh, be the same title to God's favour that the eating of it with sincerity is, it is plain, there is no more advantage in eating, than in not eating; and consequently it is as well to say, that except we forbear eating the flesh of the Son of man, we have no life in us, as to say, that except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, we have no life in us, there being plainly from this doctrine, no more danger in forbearing to eat, than in eating; nor any more necessity of eating, than of forbearing to eat, since both these practices are equally good and advantageous with sincerity, and equally bad and insignificant without it.

And now, my lord, let the world judge, whether you could have thought of doctrine more contradictory to the express words of our Saviour, and all the instituted terms of salvation, than this of yours about sincerity, which makes it no more necessary to observe the instituted terms of salvation, than to break them; and which also makes it as proper to declare it as dangerous to observe such institutions, as to reject them. This I have shewn particularly in baptism, where your doctrine makes it as proper to say, he that is baptized shall be damned, as to say, that he who is not baptized shall be damned; and in the same manner does it contradict and confound the Scriptures, and make the contrary to every institution as much a means of salvation, as the institution itself.

Your lordship has given us a demonstration, as you call it, that your doctrine of sincerity and private persuasion is right.

Thus you ask: "What is it that justified the Protestants—in setting up their own bishops? Was it, that the popish doctrines were actually corrupt, or that the Protestants were persuaded in their own consciences, that they were so? The latter without doubt." And then comes your demonstration, in this manner; "take away from them this persuasion, and they are so far from being justified, that they are condemned for their departure; give them this persuasion again, they are condemned if they do not separate*."

You want to be shewn the fallacy in this demonstration, which I hope I shall shew to your satisfaction.

* *Preser.* p. 85. *Answer to Rep.* p. 103.

It is granted, that corruption in religion is no justification of those who leave it, unless they are persuaded of that corruption.

It is also granted, that they who are fully persuaded that a religion is sinful, are obliged to separate from it, though it should not be sinful. But then it does by no means follow, that they who leave a true religion, and they who leave a false religion, through their particular persuasions, are equally justified, or have an equal title to the same degree of God's favour.

Here lies the great fallacy in this argument, that you use the same word (*viz.* justified) in relation to both these people in the very same sense; whereas if they are justified, (if this word must be used) it is in a very different sense and different measure, and are not entitled to the same degree of God's favour. Now, a fallacy in this point destroys the whole demonstration, for the question wholly turns upon this point, whether they who are sincere in a true religion, and they who are sincere in a false religion, are equally justified and entitled to the same degrees of God's favour.

This very thing was objected to you by the learned Committee, who said, "that an erroneous conscience was never, till now, allowed wholly to justify men in their errors *."

To which you have no better answer to make than this, "That it must either justify them or not justify them. It must either wholly justify them, or not justify them at all †."

My lord, I suppose a man is justified by his living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. I ask therefore, does his living soberly justify him wholly, or does it not justify him at all? If it justifies him wholly, then there is no occasion of his living righteously and godly; if it does not justify him at all, then there is no need of his living soberly.

Your answer to the Committee has just as much sense or divinity in it, as there is in this argument.

Here I must desire, that it may be observed, that the question is, not whether sincerity in any religion, does not recommend us to the favour of God, but whether we are entitled to the same degrees of God's favour, whether we are sincere in a true or false way of worship.

I shall therefore farther consider this point.

* Repr. p. 7.

† Answer to Repr. p. 95.

First, If true and right religion hath any thing in its own nature to recommend us to God, then sincerity in this true and right religion must recommend us more to God, than sincerity in a false and wrong religion; because we have a recommendation from our religion, as well as from our sincerity in it. For instance; if it be in any degree in the world more acceptable to God, that we should follow Christ, than Mahomet, our sincerity in following Christ must recommend us to just so much more of God's favour, than our sincerity in following Mahomet; as it is more acceptable to him that we should follow one than the other. Now to say that true and right religion has nothing in its own nature to recommend us to God, is saying, that things true and right are no more acceptable to God, than things false and wrong; but as it would be blasphemy to say this, so it is very little less to say, that sincerity in a false and wrong religion is just the same justification or recommendation to the favour of God, that sincerity in the true and right religion is.

Farther; The whole end and design of religion is, to recommend us to the favour of God. If therefore we can suppose a religion instituted by God, which does no more, as such, recommend us to the favour of God, than a religion invented by men or devils, as such, recommends us to the favour of God; then we must also suppose, that God has instituted a religion which does not at all answer the general end and design of religion, viz. the recommending us to the favour of God.

Unless therefore we will prophanely declare, that God has instituted a religion, which, as such, does us no service, nor any better promotes the general end of religion, than any corrupt inventions of men, we must affirm; that sincerity in his religion will entitle us to greater degrees of his favour, than sincerity in a religion not from him.

Secondly, If there be any real excellency or goodness in one religion which is not in another, then it is certain, that sincerity does not equally justify us in any religion; and on the contrary, it is as certain, that if sincerity in any religion does entitle us to the same degrees of God's favour, then there is no such thing as any real excellency or goodness in one religion, which is not in another.

When you was charged with destroying all difference between religions by this account of sincerity, you retreat to an answer as

weak as could possibly have been thought of. Thus you say; "What I said about private persuasion relates to the justification of the man before God, and not to the excellency of one communion above another, which it leaves just as it found it*."

Here, my lord, you suppose that one religion may very much exceed another religion in goodness and excellency, and yet that this goodness and excellency has nothing to do with the justification of persons; for you say, you was not speaking of the excellency of one communion above another, but of what relates to the justification of a man, &c. which plainly shews that you do not allow the excellency of religion to have any thing to do with the justification of men; for if you did, it must have been necessary to speak of the excellency of one religion above another, when you was speaking of what it is which justifies a man before God.

Now, my lord, to grant that there is an excellency and goodness in some religion, and yet exclude this excellent and good religion, from having any more in it to justify and recommend us to the favour of God, than what is to be found in any other religion less excellent; is just as good sense, as to allow, that some food is much more excellent and proper than other food; and yet exclude this most excellent proper food, from having any thing in it to preserve health and strength, more than in any other food.

For the goodness and excellency of religion, is as truly a relative goodness and excellency, as the goodness and excellency of food is a relative goodness and excellency. And as that food can only be said to be better than another food, because it has a better effect upon the body than any other food; so that religion can only be said to be better than another, because it raises us higher in the favour of God than any other religion.

It is therefore most certain, that if any one religion can be said to be better than another, it must be, because one religion may be of more advantage to us than another.

For as religion in general is good, because it does us good, and brings us into favour with God; so the particular excellency and goodness of any religion, must consist in this, that it does us a more particular good, and raises us to higher degrees of God's favour, than a less excellent religion would have done.

So that when your lordship talks of the excellency of one religion above another, as having nothing in it, as such, to recommend us to higher degrees of God's favour, or effect our justification; it is fully as absurd, as to say, that though one kind of learning may be more excellent than another kind of learning, yet no men are more excellent or valuable for having one kind of learning than another.

For as no kind of learning can be said to be peculiarly excellent, but because it gives some peculiar excellency to those who are masters of it; so no kind of religion can be said to be more excellent than another, unless those who profess it, reap some advantage from it, which is not to be had from a religion less excellent.

From all this, it appears, first, that there can be no such thing as any goodness or excellency in one religion above another, but as it procures a peculiar good and advantage to those who profess it.

Secondly, That your lordship can allow no other goodness or excellency in religion, even from your own express words, but what implies as great an absurdity, as to allow of good food, good learning, or good advice, which can do nobody any good at all.

For since you expressly exclude the goodness or excellency of any religion from having any part in recommending us to the favour of God, and will only allow it to carry us so far, as sincerity in a worse religion will carry us; it is certain, that this good and excellent religion, is just as good as that, which does us no good at all.

So that whether you will yet own that you have destroyed all the difference betwixt religions, or not, I cannot tell; yet I imagine every one will see that you have only left such a goodness in one religion above another, as can do nobody any good at all.

The short is this; if you will own there is no excellency in one religion above another, then you are guilty of making Christianity no better than Mahometanism; but if you will acknowledge a goodness and excellency in one religion above another, and yet contend that it is sincerity alone, which does us any good, or recommends us to the favour of God, in all religions alike; this is as absurd, as to say, such a thing is much better for us than any other thing, and yet assert, that any other thing will do us as much good as that.

I have, I hope, sufficiently confuted your doctrine of sincerity, from the nature of religion. I shall now in a word or two examine it farther, by considering the nature of private persuasion, which can do all these mighty things.

And, first, I deny that persuasion was the only thing which justified the Protestants, or which recommends people to the favour of God in the choice of a religion, and that, because if their private persuasion was founded in pride, prejudice, worldly interest, or any thing, but the real truth, and the justice of the cause, that their private persuasion did not justify them before God; nor had they, upon this supposition, so good a title to his favour, as those who did not reform.

If you say, that persons cannot be sincere in their persuasions, who are influenced by pride, or prejudice, or any false motive, to this I answer;

First, That according to your own principles, that man is to be esteemed sincere, who thinks himself to be sincere. For, as it is a first principle with you, that a man is justified in point of religion, not because he observes what in its own nature is true and right religion, but because he observes that which he thinks to be true and right religion; so according to this principle a man is to be accounted sincere, not because he acts up to true and just principles of sincerity, but because he thinks in his own mind, that he does act up to such just and true principles of sincerity. So that, my lord, sincerity it seems is as truly a private persuasion, as religion is a private persuasion; and therefore any one may as easily think himself truly sincere, and yet not have true sincerity, as he may think himself in the true religion, and yet not be in the true religion.

Unless therefore you will maintain, that a person who is mistaken in his sincerity, and mistaken in his religion too, who hath neither true religion, or true sincerity, hath as good a title to the favour of God, as he who is truly sincere, and in a true religion, you must give up this cause of sincerity. For it is demonstrable from your own principles, that any one may as often happen to be mistaken in his sincerity, and take that for sincerity which is not sincerity, as he may be mistaken in his religion, and take that for religion which is not religion.

And consequently it is as reasonable to talk of sincere persons, who are influenced by wrong motives, as to talk of persons being justified in religion, who live in a false religion.

So that, my lord, this is the result of your doctrine, that persons neither truly sincere, nor in the true religion, are yet entitled to the same degrees of God's favour, with those who are truly sincere in the true religion.

The short is this, according to a maxim of your own, you are obliged to acknowledge that man to be sincere, who thinks himself to be sincere; because you say a man is to be esteemed religious, not because he practises true religion, but because he thinks he practises true religion; therefore you must say, that a man is sincere, not because he is truly sincere, but because he thinks himself to be sincere.

It is also as possible and as likely for a man to be mistaken in those things which constitute true sincerity, as in those things which constitute true religion.

And therefore if this sincerity be the only and the same title to God's favour in any religion, it follows that sincerity, though influenced by false motives, and in a false way of worship, is as acceptable to God, as a sincere persuasion governed by right motives in a true and instituted way of worship.

So that all the fine things which you have said of sincerity, as implying in it all which is rational and excellent, are come to nothing; and you are as strictly obliged to allow that man to be sincere who mistakes the grounds and principles of true sincerity, because he thinks himself to be sincere, as to allow that person to be justified in his religion, who mistakes the true religion, because he thinks himself in the true religion.

So that it is not sincerity as it contains all that is rational and excellent which alone justifies, but as it may be an idle, vain, whimsical persuasion, in which people think themselves in the right. This persuasion, though founded in the follies, passions, and prejudices of human nature, consecrates every way of worship, and makes the man thus persuaded, as acceptable to God, as he who through a right use of his reason, serves God in that method which he has instituted.

I shall end this point with only this observation, that however hearty a friend you may be to the Christian religion yourself, this I dare say, that the heartiest enemy it has, will thank you for thus defending it. And they who wish all the distinction between religions confounded, and maintain that we have nothing to hope or fear but from our own persuasions, are the only persons who can call you their proper defender.

Of the Reformation.

I PROCEED now in a word or two to shew, that the necessity of communion with any particular church, and the effects of excommunication, are perfectly consistent with the principles of the Reformation.

You say, "If there be a church authority to oblige people to external communion—I beg to know how can the Reformation itself be justified.—For there was then an order of churchmen, vested with all spiritual authority—there was therefore a church authority to oblige Christians, a power of some over others, What was it therefore to which we owe this very church of England*?"

To this it may be answered,

First, that this argument proceeds upon a false supposition, namely, that it is the laws of any men, which obliges us to external communion. Which I have already shewn to be as false, as to suppose that it is the laws of any men which oblige us to be Christians.

Secondly, That there may be a real and a great authority which obliges us to external communion, though this authority be not founded in any human laws, for there is as real and apparent an authority for baptism, and the supper of the Lord, and other parts of external communion, as if they were the express matter of any human laws.

Thirdly, That the laws of men in this affair of religion, are of the same obligation and force that they are in other matters. If they command things indifferent, they are to be obeyed for the authority of the command; if they enjoin things in their own nature good, the necessity of obedience is greater; but if they command things unlawful, we are not to comply, but obey God rather than man.

Fourthly, The question therefore at the Reformation was not whether the laws of the pope or the prince were on the side of the church of Rome, but whether that faith and those institutions which constitute the Christian religion was with the Reformers, or

* Answer to Repr. p. 118.

with the Papists. For the church authority which obliged them then, and which obliges us now, to external communion, was not an authority which obliged them to comply with any number of bishops, or any state laws, but to enter into communion with that bishop or bishops who observed that way of worship which Christ had instituted. The necessity of being in external communion, does not oblige us to be in communion with the pope or any number of bishops, as such, whose authority we may happen to be born under, but it obliges us to be in that communion which is that way or method of salvation which Christ has instituted.

So that though we should grant, that at the Reformation we broke through the human laws of the church which required us to continue in communion with the church of Rome, it will by no means follow that we broke through that authority which obliges us to external communion, because that authority is not founded in any human laws, but is the authority of Christ, requiring us to observe all those things which constitutes external communion. For as it is the authority of Christ which obliges us to be Christians, so that same authority obliges us to enter into that communion where the institutions and faith of Christ are preserved.

When therefore you say, "if church authority (meaning human laws) be a sufficient obligation upon them to determine them, then our fore-fathers ought not in conscience to have separated from the church of Rome *."

This, my lord, is no more to the purpose than if you had said, if the king of France has a right to be obeyed all over Europe, then all over Europe they ought in conscience to obey him.

For since it is neither pretended nor allowed, that human laws are a sufficient obligation to external communion, to argue from this supposition is as foreign to the purpose, as to suppose that the king of France was governor of all Europe.

The next step you take is also very extraordinary, where having rejected human authority from being a sufficient obligation to external communion, you thus proceed, "but if men are their own judges by the laws of God and of Christ in this matter; if they have a right to use their judgment and be determined by it—then here is a justification of the Reformation, and particularly of the Protestant church of England †."

The most complaisant justification, my lord, that could possibly

* Page 118.

† Ibid.

have been thought of, because it as peculiarly justifies all the enemies of the church of England, of what kind soever, as it justifies the Protestant church of England.

For your argument proceeds thus; if there be no human authority to which we are absolutely obliged to submit, but have a right to use our own judgments, then the Reformation is justified. Here we see the doctrines of the reformed church are not taken into the question; she is not said to be justified, as being a true church, or as preserving those orders and institutions, which constitute the true church; but is justified, because men may use their reason, and not enter into any communion which human laws have happened to establish. Now if we of the church of England are justified in the choice of your religion, because no human laws have an absolute power to oblige us to be of any particular religion, then all people, whether Papists or Protestants, whether Quakers, Ranters, Jews, Turks, and Infidels, are equally justified in the choice of their particular ways of worship, because human laws have not an absolute power to oblige them to be of any particular religion. So that though you call this a justification of the Protestant church of England, you might as justly have called it a justification of Quakers, Jews, Turks, and Infidels: for it is as truly a justification of every one of them, as it is a justification of the church of England.

But to proceed, How comes it, my lord, that the Reformation is justified, because people may use their reason, and are not under a necessity from human laws of being of this or that church? Why must the Reformation be right and just, because human laws are not sufficient to hinder a reformation? Is there no other authority that can make any particular religion necessary, because human authority cannot? May it not be our duty to be of this communion, and a sin to enter into another communion, though human laws, as such, cannot make the one a duty, or the other a sin? Does baptism, the supper of the Lord, and a belief in Jesus Christ, cease to be necessary; because that necessity does not arise from human laws?

Now if things may be necessary to salvation, though they are not made so by human authority, then it is no justification of the Reformation to say, that the reformers might use their reason, and not chuse that religion which human laws commanded them to chuse; this will be no justification, till it appears, that they

chose that religion which the authority of God required them to chuse.

For it would be nonsense to say people are justified for having such a sort of baptism, because the necessity of baptism, does not arise from human laws. Yet this is as good sense, as to say, such a people are justified in their religion, because no religion is made necessary by human laws. For as they are only justified in point of baptism, who observe such baptism, as the authority of God has appointed, so are they only justified in their religion, who enter into that religion which the authority of God has instituted.

But your lordship has no sooner shewn that human authority, as such, cannot oblige us to be of any particular religion, but you presently congratulate your readers upon an entire freedom from all authority in religion, and without once mentioning that the Reformation is right and just because of the orders, doctrines, or institutions, which it maintains; you say it is justified for such a reason as justifies in an equal degree every religion, and every change of religion in the world. You have so far justified it, as to shew that it is as well to be of it, as of any other church; and as well to be of any other church as of it.

Who would not think, my lord, that the instituted terms of salvation had something to do with the justification of Christians? Yet you can justify people without any regard to them. Who would not think that a religion is unjustifiable, if it is contrary to the religion instituted by Christ? Yet your lordship has justified all changes in religion, without any regard to the institutions of Christ, solely for this reason, because men may use their own judgment, and not submit to the laws of men, as such, in the choice of religion. As if because they are not to be altogether governed by the commands of men in the choice of a religion, neither are they to be determined by the authority of God, or any more tied down to his institutions, than to human laws. Who would think that no change in religion is dangerous, because religion is only instituted by God, and has his authority to make it necessary? Yet your lordship banishes all danger from every change of religion, and pronounces the same safety in every opinion, because people are under no absolute human authority.

It is very surprizing, after all this, to see your lordship breaking out into passionate expressions for the cause of the Reformation, and so often declaring that it is for sake of the Refor-

ination that you have taken so much pains, and with so much pleasure, in your late writings.

Now it seems your adversaries have undermined the very foundations of the reformed church of England; and that in this manner:

First, They justify the church of England, by shewing that it maintains all those orders, institutions, and doctrines, which Christ has made necessary to salvation; that it is a true Church, because it consists of all those things which by the institution of Christ constitute a true church.

For this, your lordship rebukes them as enemies to the reformation, as friends to Popery; and declares, that the Protestants are not justified because they have chosen a true and right religion, but because they think they have chosen a true and right religion,

Again, your adversaries insist upon the necessity of entering into communion with the church of England, because it is a true church of Christ; and declare those guilty of the heinous sin of schism, who separate from her communion.

Here again you condemn them, as conspiring the ruin of the Reformation, because if the Dissenters are not justified in their separation from the church of England by their private persuasion, neither is the church of England to be justified for its separation from Rome. So that the difference between your lordship and your adversaries in relation to the reformed church of England, is this:

They support and recommend this church, because it contains all the necessary doctrines and institutions of Christ, and consequently give it an advantage over every other way of worship, which is either corrupted or defective in these doctrines and institutions of Christ.

But you support and recommend it (pardon the expressions) not from any thing which relates to it at all, but from private persuasion; and consequently allow every religion in the world to be as just and good, and safe, if men are but so persuaded.

They defend the church of England, by shewing what it is, and by asserting the truth of its doctrines.

You have no title to be mentioned amongst its defenders, but as you may be called a defender of Quakers and Fanatics, Jews and Turks, and every religion in the world, which any one thinks to be right.

To proceed; As a farther defence of the Reformation, you ask, "How did the first reformers behave themselves? Did they not think and speak of them (viz. absolution and excommunication) as having nothing to do with the favour of God, as human engines, and mere outcries of human terror? And did they mean by this to claim to themselves the right of absolution, which they had denied to others, because they were fallible and weak men; or to assert a power of excommunication, so as to affect men's eternal salvation, to themselves in one church, which they had disregarded and trampled upon in another? No: they treated all excommunications as alike, and upon an equal foot; and could, upon no other account, neglect and disregard them as they did, but because God had not given to any man the disposal of his mercy or anger*."

The argument, my lord, here proceeds thus: First, That all absolutions and excommunications must have been esteemed alike, and equally insignificant by our reformers, because they were not terrified at the excommunications of the church of Rome, nor thought an absolution from that church necessary.

Secondly, That the Reformers having thus disregarded these powers in that church, ought not to pretend that the same powers have any more effect when they exercise them in this church.

To this it may be answered, that if we ought not to pretend to any effects in absolution or excommunication, because we disregarded those powers as exercised by the church of Rome; that then we ought not to pretend the necessity of any faith, because we disregarded the faith of the Romish church; nor the necessity of any sacraments, nor the necessity of the canonical writings, because we disregarded the canonical books of the church of Rome. And it is as good sense to cry out here, "Did they not treat their sacraments as mere inventions of men? Did they mean by this to claim to themselves a power to make sacraments necessary in one church, which power they had trampled upon in another? Did they deny the necessity of seven sacraments there, in order to assert the necessity of two sacraments here? No: they treated all sacraments as alike, and upon an equal foot, with respect to God's favour, and could upon no other account neglect and disregard them

* Answer to Repr. p. 121, 122.

as they did, but because God's favour or displeasure was no ways affected by any sacraments."

Here let common sense judge, whether this argument of yours shewing the unreasonableness of pretending to any significancy in excommunication, because we disregarded the excommunication of the church of Rome, does not prove it as unreasonable to insist upon the necessity of any faith, or any sacraments, or any canonical books, because we denied the Romish creed, the Romish sacraments, and canon of Scripture?

For our reformers no more intended to shew that excommunication was a dream and trifle, because they disregarded the excommunication of the church of Rome; than they intended to shew that all sacraments, all faith, and all Scripture, were dreams and trifles, by their not owning either the sacraments, or the creed, or the canon of the church of Rome. And, my lord, what a worthy defender of Christianity and the Reformation would he be, who should ask us what we mean by the necessity of sacraments, or faith, or Scripture, since we have not allowed the necessity either of the Romish sacraments, faith, or Scripture? Yet such a defender is your lordship, who contends that we ought to reject excommunication as a trifle and a dream, because we disregarded the excommunication of the church of Rome.

I have now gone as far in the examination of your doctrines as my present design will allow me, and am apt to think that in this and my former letters, I have gone so far as to shew, that a few more such defences of Christianity and the Reformation, as you have given us, would compleat their ruin, as far as human writings can compleat it.

And had you meant ever so much harm to Christianity and the Reformation, I believe no one who wishes their confusion, would have thought you could have taken a better way to obtain that end, than by writing as you have lately written.

For he must be a very bitter enemy to them both, who would not think it sufficient, to set Christianity and Mahometanism, the Reformation and Quakerism upon the same foot.

And he must be very slow of apprehension, who does not see that to be plainly done, by resolving all into private persuasion, and making sincerity in every religion, whether true or false, the same title to the same degrees of God's favour.

I shall not with your lordship make any declarations about my own sincerity; I am content to leave that to God, and to let all the world pass what judgment they please about it.

I am your lordship's

Most humble servant,

WILLIAM LAW.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE learned Committee observed to your lordship, that “an erroneous conscience was never, till now, allowed wholly to justify men in their errors.”

This observation I have shewn to be true and just, as it implies, that though sincerity in an erroneous way of worship should in some degree or other recommend men to the favour or mercy of God; yet it is not that entire recommendation to his favour, which is effected by our sincere obedience in the true way of salvation: that is, though it should justify them in some degree, yet it cannot justify them in that degree, in which they are justified, who sincerely serve God, in that true religion which he himself has instituted.

Now our justification, as it is effected by the merits of Christ, is in one and the same degree; but as our justification is effected by our own behaviour, it is as capable of different degrees, as our virtue and holiness is capable of different degrees; and it is also necessary that our justification be more or less, according as our holiness is more or less.

Yet in answer to this observation of the learned Committee, you say, “it must either justify them, or not justify them; it must either justify them wholly, or not justify them at all.” This, my lord, is as contrary to the Scripture, as it is to the observation of the Committee. For our blessed Saviour, speaking of the publican, says, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other*.”

Here, my lord, is as plain a declaration of degrees in justification, as can well be made, so far as justification can be effected by our own behaviour.

* Luke xviii, 10, &c.

For, it is plain, the publican was not wholly justified, because then there would be no need of his embracing Christianity; it is also plain, that he was justified in part, or else he could not be said to be justified rather than the Pharisee.

If therefore your answer confutes the observation of the learned Committee, it must also confute this passage of Scripture.

I shall only add one word in relation to another point.

I have already shewn the falseness and evil tendency of your argument against excommunication, which you asserted to be a dream and trifle, without any effect, because it is our own behaviour alone which can signify any thing to us with regard to the favour of God. Now, my lord, this philosophy strikes at the very vitals of the Christian religion: for, if this sentence can have no effect, if it is a dream and trifle, because it is our behaviour alone on which the favour of God depends; then how shall we account for these passages of Scripture, which attribute our justification to the merits and death of Christ? As thus;

“ Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins *.”

“ In whom we have redemption, through his blood †.”

“ Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath ‡ ?”

It is the constant uniform doctrine of Scripture, that our reconciliation and peace with God, our justification and sanctification before God, is owing to the merits and death of Christ. But if what you have said be true, that it is our behaviour alone, which procures the favour of God, then the blood of Christ must be as truly without any effect, as excommunication is without any effect,

For if the favour of God depends entirely upon our behaviour alone, then it can depend upon nothing else; and if it depend upon nothing else, then every thing else is equally trifling and without any effect as to that purpose; and consequently every passage in Scripture which ascribes our acceptance with God to the merits and blood of Christ, is as much condemned by your doctrine, as the effects of excommunication are condemned by it.

Whether your lordship did not perceive the inconsistency of this doctrine with that satisfaction and redemption which the Scriptures teach; or whether you knowingly intended to oppose this doctrine; is what I shall leave to every one's own judgment. Thus much I shall only say, that as you have here directly contradicted the first

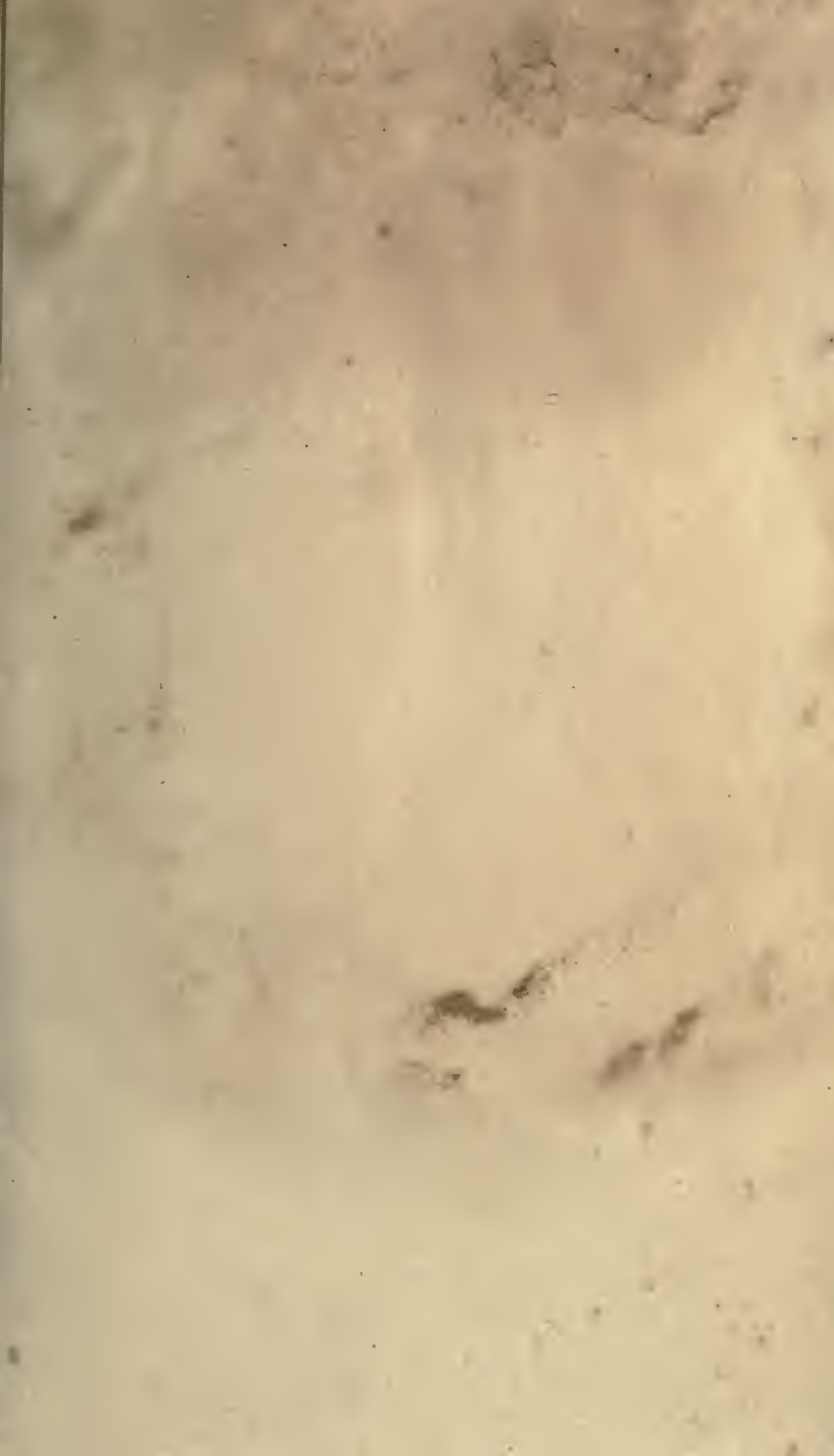
* Gal. i. 3.

- † Ephes. i. 7.

‡ Rom. v. 9.

principle of the Christian religion, if it is not what you intended. I hope you will, for the sake of Christianity, venture to declare, that though you have asserted, that it is our behaviour alone, yet it is not our behaviour alone, but more particularly the merits and death of Christ which recommends us to the favour of God.

END OF VOL. I.



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